
PRISON JOURNAL №4

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PRISON JOURNAL No 4

DECEMBER 1984

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The Prison Education Program at SFU oversees the administration of post-secondary education programs in four Federal prisons in British Columbia and carries on an active research and community affairs program. The SFU Programs at Kent, Matsqui, Mountain and William Head Institutions offer courses in the Liberal Arts leading to degree completion in several academic disciplines. As well, the Program sponsors courses and workshops in Writing and the Fine and Performing Arts.

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Editorial:

Prisons and Utopias

The selections in this issue of *Prison Journal* can be divided into two very different literary categories: the picaresque which deals with the "outsider" who, sooner or later, finds himself in direct conflict with the law and hence on the "inside"; and the utopian which deals with the creation of an alternative community that reflects a social and political system superior to the one we actually live in. These two genres, usually regarded as diametrically opposed, are, however, brought into a meaningful conjunction by the prison context: for prison is that very real "nowhere" which focuses not only the moral and legal issues of how someone got there, but also the encompassing issues of what type of society is he to return to, what are its convictions. These questions clearly concern all of us, whether on the "inside" or the "outside". As H.G. Wells in *A Modern Utopia* states, "Crime [...] is the measure of a state's failure, all crime in the end is the crime of the community." Prisons are, by definition, highly political; hence, the literature produced about them is bound to be political in nature even when ostensibly concerned with the purely "literary" (as, for example, in some of the poetry selections in this issue).

This issue of *Prison Journal* has been arranged in order to highlight a progressively explicit attempt to deal with these political dimensions. In David Rourke's *Shortchanged*, which is part of an opening trilogy of picaresque tales, a young boy in a reformatory is initiated by means of a wryly humorous "tall tale" into the ways of the world and the nature of institutional authority. Shawn Edwards' *High Spirits* depicts a "charming rogue" whose thirst for adventure takes the form of manic comic book violence relished purely for its own sake; even the skirmish with the law is inconsequential, only a source of further hijinks. Not quite a case of arrested adoles-

cence. *Walker's Run* introduces a more serious note. The central character, a "rounder" who has seen it all before, is arrested for bank robbery. He was led back to the "game" because of an espousal of that most precious of middle class values — security (he pays his Visa bill with his "take"). Cops and robbers proceed to act out their roles in a clumsy ballet.

Joe Pilon's *The Washington Redskins are the Red Brigades of the N.F.L.* introduces us to a cell where several prisoners are huddled around a T.V. set, commenting on the images of the world outside. In this static story the play of ideas flickers uneasily around political issues and the classic question of "what is to be done". There is a growing sense that nothing can be done, that everyone is finally "co-opted". Maybe it is better to turn on the finely tuned ballet of football violence. This story does, however, anticipate — albeit ironically — some of the key ideas in the centre piece of this issue of *Prison Journal*, an interview with Gerry Hannah, "retired" guerilla, former member of the "Squamish Five" Direct Action Group. When we learned that Gerry Hannah was at Matsqui Institution, we decided to interview him. His views, quite independent of the question of condoning or condemning, warrant a hearing. The discussions of punk music, feminism, ecology, anarchism converge on a central political question of our time: to what degree is violence justified in the struggle to educate the public about a utopian political vision? Frank Guiney's essay on the teaching of a humanities course at the Carnegie Centre in Vancouver's East End offers a radically different way of offering education. For some of these disadvantaged East-Enders, the introduction to a new world of ideas was tantamount to a cultural "jail-break". Our contemporary literature is full of the metaphors of prison, but we often forget that the world has a very real and concrete reference and that it is only in our imaginative grasp of both the literal and literary that a truly creative dialogue can occur. To encourage this interchange, *Prison Journal* welcomes contributions from writers concerned with the many issues which the prison draws into focus.

Peter Murphy and John Abbott



Spook

Being in a dungeon is said to be
conductive to insanity
by liberal sages.

"How very wrong" I hum
my toe nails clicking like
out of tune castenets
upon the damp concrete floor
"I'm all here"

Bruce Chester



Shortchanged

After roll call one sweltering Saturday afternoon in July, our work supervisor, Mr. Jones, rapped on his clipboard for silence.

"I want three volunteers!" he boomed out in a sergeant's voice.

The heat must be affecting his mind, I thought, looking around at my reform school mates. They weren't the volunteering type unless you were handing out paroles!

Mr. Jones pulled a checkered handkerchief from an inside pocket of his olive green jacket and wiped at the sweat beads on his head.

"How about the movies, Jones?" someone hollered.

"Yeh! How about it, Jones!" someone else yelled.

"No volunteers, no movies!" Jones said.

Moans and groans could be heard all over the parade square, but no one did any volunteering. Well, almost no one, that is, unless you wanted to count a dragonfly!

One droned across the square, helicoptering past the rows of brylcreamed heads, and hung in the air, hovering above Mr. Jones.

"No volunteers, eh?" he said. "Alright! I'll pick them myself." He turned over the clipboard and ran a finger down the page of a black book fastened to the back.

Suddenly, the dragonfly darted down and skimmed across the top of his bald head. Mr. Jones calmly reached out with the board, smacked the fly down and stepped on it.

Some of the boys hissed at Jones for that. One barked like a fox and the fat boy in front of me rocked back and forth on his heels and quacked. I laughed, just like everyone else, but my laugh froze on my face as Jones crooked his finger and

beckoned at me.

"Kane! Front and centre on the double! Road gang detail!" I stepped out of the ranks and marched to the front of the square. The fox barker and the quacker were next.

"Trott! Hart! Front and centre! On the double, boys!"

Jones never even looked at them when he called their names. He seemed to know their voices like he knew my laugh. I couldn't figure out how: I'd only been at the school for two weeks and this was the first time I had laughed.

Jones dismissed the other boys, took us down to the toolshed and handed out the road brooms.

"Now, lads," he said, pointing to a long, winding driveway below the school. "The superintendent wants that road swept as clean as a cake plate — understand?"

"Yes."

"I can't hear you, boys!"

"Yes...Sir!"

"That's better. Single file. Off you go now."

We lifted the brooms to our shoulders and marched off down the road. Mr. Jones' voice came chasing after us.

"No nonsense now. I want to see nothing but elbows and brooms moving down that driveway — understand?"

"Yes...sirrrr!"

As soon as we got down to the driveway and out of Jones' sight, Hart threw down his broom.

"See!" he said, slapping his big pudgy gut. "Told ya Jones would fall for the old quack, quack bit. Didn't I, Trott?" Trott's pinched little face pursed in a frown.

"I don't like playing the fox!" he whined.

"Ah, com'on Trott old buddy," Hart laughed. "Foxes have the most fun!"

"I do not!" Trott cried. "I wanna be the duck next time or I'm not going to the Tuck Shop!" Hart's chubby red face creased in a frown. "I was only joking, Trott, what's the matter with you?"

"Hey!" I said. "If you guys like pushing a broom so much, why didn't ya just volunteer?"

"Jones would've knowed what we was up to," Trott blurted out.

"Dummy up, Trott!" Hart said. "Eaton's doesn't tell the Bay their business, so don't tell ours."

"Look out!" I yelled. "Jones is watching from the top of the hill."

We were all elbows and brooms after that. We pushed and spat and pushed and cursed until the dust had us gasping for breath.

"Is Jones still watching?" Hart asked.

"Look yourself," I said, rubbing at the angry blistering on my hands.

"Jones is gone and I'm so thirsty I could drink a bucket of piss. How about you, Trott?" Hart asked. Trott spat on the road.

"Want me to go now, Hart?" Hart ignored him and came over and stared me in the face like he was hunting for a blackhead between my freckles.

"You a squealer?" he suddenly asked.

"You're the only one who looks like a pig around here, Hart," I said.

"You don't have to get so snotty about it, Kane. I could get in lots of shit if ya are." I shook my head.

"I'm no squealer, Hart!"

"He's O.K." Trott said, banging his broom on the road. "Jackson told me he beat the snot out of Olson in the cell block." Trott's words melted the frown on Hart's face. He rolled over the waist seam of his puffy bleached denims and pulled out a folded two-dollar bill.

"How would ya like a cold root beer and a Milky Way bar?" he asked. I wasn't sure what he was hinting at but I knew a cold root beer would sure hit the spot.

"What's the deal?" I asked.

"Just keep pushing the broom," Hart smirked. "Make lots of dust while Trott runs down to the Tuck Shop." That didn't sound like a bad deal.

Hart gave Trott the money and we made dust so Jones couldn't tell if anyone was missing.

"Where's the Tuck Shop?" I asked.

"It's about two blocks down past the driveway," Hart said, pointing his broom down the road. All I could see down there was Trott, running like a wind through the grass under the trees.

"The nuts from Essondale buy pop and bars down there," Hart explained.

"You ever been down there, Hart?"

"Yeh, but ya got to be careful. The shop owners know our school clothes and they'll phone Jones if they see ya."

"Well, how do you get the goodies without getting caught?"

"Ah, ya gotta find some nut to buy them for ya."

For the next twenty minutes or so, we pushed the brooms, making dust and keeping a look out for Jones. By the time we spotted Trott coming through the trees, I was thirsty enough to join Hart in that bucket of piss!

"Something's wrong!" Hart yelled. "Look at his hands. See a bag?" If Trott had one, it wasn't in his hands. Every few yards he would stop and twist his head around.

"Maybe the bag's in his shirt?" I said.

"Naw, he'd carry the stuff in his hands so he could chuck it if Jones came along."

Trott arrived breathless, flopped down in the grass beside the road and gasped out his story.

"Bugs...gave one the money...he ate it..goddamn bug ate the money and chased me." He lurched up to a sitting position and peered anxiously down the road.

"Can...can ya see him...?"

I stared and stared until my eyes bugged out but all I could see was tall tree shadows.

"Son-of-a-bitch!" Hart cried. "Don't they ever feed those nuts down there?" He sat down, pulled off his boot and a five-dollar bill dropped out — boy, this guy had money in every crack!

"Who wants to make the Tuck Stop run?" he asked. Trott gave me a sly grin and looked down at the trees.

"What's the deal?" I asked.

"You get a pop and a bar, I get the rest."

I was too thirsty to argue. I just took the money and started down the road.

"Hey!" Hart called. "Watch out who ya give the money to."

"How can ya tell which nut to trust?"

"Look for one with no teeth!" he cried. "I got no more damn money left!"

I waved and ran off as Hart and Trott raised dust to conceal my absence. It felt good to run instead of wrestling with that big heavy broom. I ran in the grass under the trees and thought of crushed ice and root beer. I thought of nuts, too, but I didn't see any until I got down to a squat green quonset hut.

A gristled-faced old man, wearing a beaver-skin cap with Mickey Mouse flaps, was sitting on a bench outside the hut. There was no one else around so I decided to check him out.

"Sure hot out, eh?" I said, striding up. The old man didn't seem to hear me. He was staring off at the mountains. Maybe he's a little deaf, I thought. I leaned over and lifted the ear flap on his cap.

"Is this the Tuck Shop, mister?"

"I heard ya the first time, sonny," he said, turning and pointing a tobacco-stained finger at me.

"Oh, I thought maybe yas was deaf," I said.

"Never heard better, sonny. See pretty well, too. Take that mountain yonder. See that creek bed that looks like a stripe down a skunk's back?" My eyes followed his to the mountain.

"Yep, I see it," I said.

"Come again, sonny?"

"I said I see it!"

"You do?"

"Yep," I assured him. "The creek starts in that ravine near the top of the mountain."

"You see pretty well for a youngster."

"I was born and raised in mountain country," I said, sticking out my chest a bit.

"That a fact!"

"Yep! I can track a squirrel up a tree."

"Can ya see that old snag tree in the ravine...the one with the widow's peak?"

"Sure," I said. "The top's been split black from lightning strikes."

"That's the one, sonny. Can ya see the hole below the split?"

Hell! I could barely see the blackened tree, let alone a hole.

"I...I think I do," I said. "It's about the size of a man's head. Is that the one?"

"Well, I reckon it is, sonny. Only it's smaller...about the size of my fist!" He clenched his fist and waved it at me. The knuckles were all hammered flat like the edge of a hazel walking stick.

"Yes, you're right, mister," I said, backing up quick. "It is smaller, now that ya mention it."

"Made by a woodpecker with a bright red head," he said.

"That's an awful long way to see a woodpecker, mister."

"Didn't say I seen him, sonny. Heard him. Sat right here and heard him." I looked at the mountain. It had to be more than five miles away!

"I've been listening to his rat-a-tat-tat for coming on eighteen years now. Sometimes I can hear him at night in my room. He's bored more holes up there than a gopher."

I thought he was telling me a nutbar story but he looked harmless and he had no teeth. I figured I'd just humor him along a little and then ask him to buy me some pop.

"Can ya hear that woodpecker now?" I asked. He spat at an ant crawling up his red-sole gumboot.

"Can't say I do, sonny. Spec' his pecker plum wore out!"

"Ya know, I'm a little wore out myself," I said.

"That a fact!"

"Yeh, throat's so dry I can hardly spit. They got something to drink in that shop, mister?"

His lacquer blue eyes fixed on me.

"Yep, spec' they do, sonny."

"How would ya like to get us some root beer and Milky Way bars?"

"Reckon I could. Don't see nothing wrong with that."

"Well, that's mighty neighbourly of ya, mister. I have a few friends up he road who've got a terrible thirst too and..."

"Yep, knowed ya was one of them school boys. Don't matter to me. Been in a bit of trouble in my day too. Well, we'd better get your stuff."

I gave him the five-dollar bill and told him to get all the pop and bars he could and meet me in the trees behind the shop. He came back a few minutes later with a brown paper bag.

"You thirsty?" I asked.

"That's mighty considerate of ya, sonny. Don't mind if I do."

We sat down under a tree and got down to the serious business of drinking root beer. After a couple a piece, we relaxed in the shade, munching on Milky Way bars.

"You know," I said. "There's something been bothering me about you, Mr...."

"Crow, Jack Crow from Wandering River, Alberta, sonny."

"Well, Mr. Crow, how come..."

"Jack's alright, sonny. Call me Jack."

"How come you're in Essondale, Jack? You sure don't seem crazy to me."

"Ohooo, that takes me back some time, that does. You wasn't even a gleam in yer daddy's eye when it happened. Back then, I figured there was only two things worth a damn in this old world: a good horse and a fat squaw to keep my back warm in the winter. One day my squaw up and left with a good trapper friend of mine. Horse left too. Made me damn good and mad. I tracked them all down and gun-shot the horse."

"You mean ya just up and shot them all, Jack?"

"Nope, shot the horse," he said.

"But that doesn't make any sense?"

"Does to me, sonny. Certainly does. I trusted my horse. He should've knowed better!"

"And that's why they put you in Essondale...for shooting a horse?"

"Nope, I ate that horse. Wasn't anything left but a few bones for glue. It was a piebald broomtail that put me in here. He had a black ring around his right eye and was more swayed-back than a cane rocking chair. Indian Cayuse he

was. Worst kind of horse in the world!"

"They're bad, eh, Jack?"

"Bad! Bad weren't the word for it, sonny. Take a look at this!" Jack stood up, dropped his pants and showed me some snowflake scars on his backside.

"Just bent over to pick up my hat when he done that. Just up and bit my backside like it was an apple."

"How did he put you in here, Jack?" Jack pulled up his pants and rubbed his crotch.

"He ran smack dab into a barbwire fence when he was chasing a cow. Stopped so fast I lost my chestnuts on the saddlehorn." Jack started to undo his pants again.

"I believe ya, Jack."

"Come again, sonny?"

"I said I believe ya. You don't have to take your pants off again."

"Made me dang good and mad that horse did, sonny. I went home and got my Winchester and went down to the reservation and shot that dang Indian who sold him to me."

"You shot an Indian?"

"Yep, gut-shot him six times!"

"But, why, Jack? It wasn't the Indian's fault you got hurt."

"Oh, yas it were, sonny. That horse was blinder than a dead man in a snowstorm. Never knowed it 'til he ran down that barbwire fence."

"You mean the Indian sold you a blind horse!"

"That's a fact!"

"Well, Jack," I said, climbing to my feet. "It's been nice talking to you and I wish I could stay longer but I have to be getting back."

"Come again, sonny. Don't get much company down this way. Here all the time."

Nice old fella, Jack. I waved back from up the road but he'd already forgotten me. He was staring off at the mountain again — probably wondering where that woodpecker went.

Between us, we'd drank most of the pop and eaten most of the bars but I still had a few of each left for Hart. At least I did until I saw Jones. He was standing beside Hart and Trott,

watching me run up the driveway. I pretended to trip and chucked the bag and heard the bottles break. The trick didn't work: Jones roared down the hill and whacked me on the back of the head with his clipboard.

"So! You've been down to the Tuck Shop, eh, Kane?" I sat up and rubbed at my head and tried to think while Jones went over and picked up the bag. As he opened it, the bottom suddenly dropped out and everything splashed onto the pavement.

"What's this mess?" he asked, wringing the slop from his hands.

"I...I just went to the bathroom down in the trees, Mr. Jones. I found that bag on the road and thought I'd play a trick on Hart and Trott. Someone probably threw it out of their car."

I could see Jones didn't believe me but his expression softened a bit.

"You never went near the Tuck Shop, eh, Kane?"

"No sir! I just came to reform school and I don't even know where the Tuck Shop is. And look," I said, getting up and running over and kicking the wet bars and glass down the road. "If I'd been to the Tuck Shop, sir, I sure wouldn't be packing this trash around!"

Jones' expression softened a bit more and I think I would've bluffed my way through if it hadn't been for Jack Crow. He came flapping up the road in his gumboots, shouting at the top of his lungs.

"Hey, sonny, I plum forgot about yer change!"

D.D. Rourke



First Visit to Kent Prison

But for the twenty foot chain-link fence
and the scrolls of razor wire serpentine
its perimeter, you'd think its low-slung
sprawl, its rustic brick more suburban
ranch, more prep school than prison.

Remove the squat towers
and the lonely lane where searchlights
rifle down like desolation's rat
and you might be stepping back,
clean-cut, into a highschool photograph.

The huge hills shrug their shoulders
indifferently enough, and the guards
wear uniform brown.

After the X-ray machine, after the searches
and the one toothed snap in the gut
of the orange door, after you've weighed
horror and indifference but neither wins
set by set with steady shunting hum
the rafts of pastel bars open to take you in

and down into the courtyard where
your shoe drops like lead on a rusty blot
where two waltzed so clumsily one fell
into the other's arms and, bloody, sank
to a darkness you cannot dispel

quickly enough to walk on, your knees
dragging up night through concrete.

Later, when you can dream
of men, a child, stick in hand
will pass the rusted palings
of a rotten fence that bangs
like dry board on an iron wheel
and you will pause again
in darkness, behind bars, to feel
two hundred beating hearts.

Sept. 18, 1982

T. Joyce

Noose

Hermetic in its plastic cell
discarded among the dolours
of memos, slabs of bald paper
obscure logarithms and drab
letters from one bored official
to another re: pay scale, study
report — just another item of office
furniture really, this simple
four foot stretch of white canvas
mere inches across, once taut
speckled with blood, now dull
passive, flattened in its plastic:
evidence I touch inadvertently
among the pages on the desk, and
in the moments that it takes to die
a man like purple beef strangles
beneath my finger.

Oct. 24, 1982

T. Joyce

One, two, three

It takes three to take a life:
one to keep watch, one to hold
and one to work the knife.

Oct. 24, 1982

T. Joyce



High Spirits

Shawn and Willi, Carol and Holly, who are two couples (us the buddies, them the girlfriends) were going to show Sarge a good time. He had just got out of jail. The plan was to drive over to Quadra Island for the May Day Festival and see what was jumping. We come from Campbell River; we're famous there.

I don't have a licence; the pigs took it away a long time ago for hundreds of driving offences, so the girls drive. They have a pair of little crap cars, a Jap Honda and a German Rabbit. It was picnic time and we had it packed: chicken breasts, spareribs, three bottles of Park Lane rye, a bag of weed and some salad. I saw relaxing in a haze of booze, pot and sex in the sunshine on the beach, in the middle of the festival so we wouldn't miss anything either like, although we didn't know what the festival was about or why they have it — and still don't. But Sarge was going to get fixed up with a chick and Holly would get a chance to get close to me, except that things got too wild and I never got to screw her; in fact, she ended up taking Sarge to the hospital to have his face sewed back together after it kissed a garbage can lid kind of hard. Anyway we were off, going to summerize and socialize and swim, together. With this vision in the collective focus we drove to the ferry.

Big line, big wait. And casing out the other animals in the line-up gave me a little shiver of excitement for it was an exotic and boisterous parade. There was Rick's ex-bike gang from Victoria, the ex-Bountyhunters ("ex" because the Cho-ice had shut them down, burnt up their clubhouse, beat the shit out of them as part of the close-out ceremonies). So now

they were on a weekend-run out on the frontier of loggerland. Sarge got into the needles and out of the gang a couple of weeks before the breakdown, but we knew he was still attached to the scene and in a way we wanted to ween him from it. So the bikers looked rowdy and then I saw some crazy loggers and their party girls — these people I knew were wild, we'd been in camp together. And it's pretty close where we come from, everyone scheming on each other's old ladies, old men a plotting and a smiling. So, judging from the line-up, it was going to be a wild party time, the bottles were already diving for the throats all around us, so we got into the spirit of the thing too. Millertime!

About a dozen bikes pulled on first. Sarge's tight with them, we're tight with Sarge; they set the stage so we ended up with them. It's a twenty minute ride over, sucking back the joints and telling them what we knew about the scene on Quadra —like it's happening on the spit. We cut out and wound down to the bar; you could tell this was the island because instead of having a real name like Whisky-A-Go-Go this bar was called the Harriet Bay Inn. Anyway we got stocked up on beer — this obviously wasn't going to be just a picnic. What a contrast: scooter tramps and their bitches and us. We may be crazy but our women are clean, classy and don't drink vodka out of a bottle. Sarge stayed with us which made me feel good, like possibly our plan was working, and then the bikers suddenly announced that this was too slow and they were going to cruise the island for some action. Too bad they hadn't stuck around. After we knocked the goofs out they could have really trashed them. But we got a lot of attention anyway for being seen with them, maybe too much, but that was o-kay! We could handle it.

The spit was packed when we arrived. We cleared a spot to set up in the center of things where lots of nice tighties were floating around. That's another difference between us and bikers — we like it tight! I was getting geared up with a good wash of beer in my guts, my bro Willi beside me and the smell of excitement in the air. We knew a lot of the young girls so we

introduced Sarge around to a dozen good prospects. One of them, Cheryl Hepner, she likes me but she doesn't want any of her friends to know, so if we meet by accident at closing time outside some cabaret and she scouts around and no one is looking she'll hop right in and fuck my brains out, but if we meet when any of her friends are there why she's a snotty little bitch. So she played her public trip on me this time, Sarge picked up on it and her sametime coming on to him, so he suddenly said, "Fuck off you little douchebag!" Then we began setting up the barbeque — better eat before things got rocking.

Willi and I cook the meat, the girls do the salads. So I dug the hole, lit up the charcoal and put up the grill, while the crowd around us was bouncing up and down getting sloshed. A logger I know named John showed up and pulled us aside, "Wanta come over and snort a few lines?" Sarge's jaw fell open — we sure did (everything was very new to him: he'd done four months for illegal substances, then got released and was outside for three days before he went to trial for uttering and another deuce-less, which is where I met him doing a year myself for illegal use of explosives.) Anyway John was doing us right even though we had battled before, which is the way it usually went. Imagine what John tells us, "Ya Cheryl and me are going out now." I guess the coke was a nice way to say, "Hey Man she's my ol' lady."

So the lines were good. I said "Maybe you should lay a gram or two on me, for a few bills." I knew that Sarge would dig that. With these negotiations for future pleasure insured, we went back and got some meat out of the car, you know what I'm talking about: succulent chicken breasts and fat ripe ribs from Herb's Meats, soon to be painted with our secret sauce. Along with several other of life's joys we love eating. Then John returns to the hungry healthy loggers and motions, time to snort-snort again. The barbeque is under control and already smelling that savory bark lifting smell. Late afternoon, all lights green, so we figure on a few more minutes of cooking are just enough time for some serious inhalation. And we walked off with John for a few moments...

Then it happens. As we turned the corner back to our grill, Rick suddenly shouted, "The chicken's gone!" I looked dumbfounded, "You're right! Where is she?" and I looked around slowly and lo and behold in the first group I looked at, there was a guy chomping on a piece of hot barbequed chicken. Rick followed my glance and he pads up and taps the goof on the shoulder. "What are you doing with our chicken, man?" and as politely the carnivore spat out a wing bone and replied, "Don't fucking worry about it!" real belligerent-like. Now Sarge is six four, 200 lbs, so naturally he dropped the culprit with a right, "Thud!" The chicken fell out onto the sand. A pal of chickenman made a tentative move towards Sarge and whack, Willi's right put him out. They wouldn't learn so Sarge kayoed the next fool, and I got a chance to drift the fourth pal of chickenman with a crunching right hook, which from the sound of it, at least cracked his jaw. (This would have been a good time for the bikers to put the boots to this pack of goofs but they weren't there and we aren't like that.) Willi and I really like to fight so the Quadra Island trip was shaping up nicely indeed. Since we had been snorting coke and they had been slurping booze we had them floundering in various degrees of stunned confusion in no time. I've always said that you give the chicks booze not the guys — it affects their performance.

Our girls meanwhile were yards away at the picnic spot watching the ribs while we did battle, and I shouldn't even call it that as the goofs didn't get any offence together at all at that point and their buddies had just backed off and hoped we didn't notice them. So there were a few more little skirmishes and we assumed the surrender had been given when suddenly the original chickenman himself came charging through the crowd kamikaze-style wielding a trashcan lid. Sarge turned and chickenman slashed him across the mouth with it. Split Sarge's face right open, blood everywhere and Sarge fell to his knees. Willi pounced on chickenman, yarding his head back by the hair and proceeded to pound the teeth back into the tonsils. When his arm got tired from holding the fool up, he dropped him and kicked in his cheek bones for

special effects. But this action wasn't too cool for the others on the beach; the girls were running around screaming, guys were throwing beer cans at each other (the chicken gang's macho image was quickly fading, so much for chicken heart) and the tension level was very high. For a couple of seconds in that high sun I thought Willi was throwing a boot for every beat of the chorus "Hell's Bells" which was roaring out of someone's ghetto blaster. Anyway we had to move or the good ship picnic was going to crash completely on the rocks.

Sarge was still pretty high and wasn't hurting much yet, but we sent him with Holly to the hospital to get sewed up. He wasn't happy about getting suckered like that in front of a bunch of people — but anyway. The chicken gang meantime flocked into a couple of cars and split at full tilt. We heard later that one of their cars hit a pole half way back to the ferry and one guy was killed, a couple more shattered pretty bad.

Then John came by, casual as ever, with a gram of coke. "Say, what's happening here, man?" I said, "Stay awhile and help us eat ribs and salad" (we'd really been looking forward to the chicken, and our ranks were a little thinned out). After about an hour or so the excitement was dying down, our stomachs were full, the battle won and our coke was still at hand. So before we could get arrested we packed up and headed for Campbell River.

The evening was still young when we arrived, about ten it was, and now we were in the groove so we drove down to Bobo's Cabaret to find the action. Now Bobo's is a really popular place but we're not too popular with the bosses, the Truttman's, as their whole family ratted on us in court (we had just done some time for blowing up one of their cars because he had barred us from the cabaret). So we sent Carol in to scout the party while we made do in the parking lot.

Now if you can't get to the party, then bring the party to you. So Willi and me started our own on the parking lot. I borrowed this guy's brand new GMC truck with a good sound system: booming tapedeck, boosters/equalizers/tweeters and three

way speakers. Willi and I were quite content standing in the shadows snorting and listening and doing some profound thinking about the nature of "true justice." And just when you're thinking about things they have a way of demonstrating themselves. This guy lurches out of the bar, throws up on the sidewalk and sees us laughing at him. "Hey, fuck you," he yells. We're in a good mood, we don't respond, just giggle some more. "How'd you like to get your lips punched off, you punks!" I look at Willi, he looks at me — no, mercy is a foundation of civilization — we'll leave the stiff alone. He finally trundles off and gets on his jap bike, fires it up, puts on his helmet, points the light right at us, revs the engine wildly a couple of times, lets the clutch slip and charges right at us. I'm the matador. "Back Willi," as the bike is right upon us, I jump sideways and gave the stiff a flying boot to the head. He rolled backwards off the bike and I stepped forward and kicked him flush in the face as the bike crashed into a prefab concrete barrier right in front of the bar. He jumps up to fight me, remembers that Kung Fu movie he watched the night before and slips into the martial arts routine. Yeh, O.K., I think, I'll go with this punk, so I danced around him giving the helmet open hand slaps, just playing around while the motorcycle went rrrriiiee, rrrriiiee, with its wheels still spinning, bars bent, lights broken. Finally the guy gets the message from somewhere that he is a duck, picks up the bike and packs it off all bent and twisted as it is. So sad!

So I had the fun that turn around. Our party was now rock'n! Willi and I sat back then and listened to the tunes, laughing it off, what a joke! After all that excitement I have to take a piss so I wander over to the bar and piss right in front of it. While I am pissing, the bar door crashes open and two guys stumble out. These guys don't even notice me. I guess they saw Willi standing by himself and figured him for some kind of stiff. "Hey, what you doing out there goofball? Ain't man enough to come in?" — "Got no friends, got no money, better go home, back to mommy!" — "Go home, faggot!" etc. And Willi was just leaning up against the truck looking at them. Now only one guy is doing all the talking and I should be getting mad but

this situation is really pretty funny because I'm standing only ten yards behind them in the shadows. So I approached very quietly, I can see that Willi knows what I am up to. Just like a lynx I slide up behind these guys. Willi keeps the conversation happening, "Who the fuck are you talking too, eh?" The mouthpiece snaps back, "Goofball." Well, that was my cue. Whack! Picture-perfect left hook right on the ol' jawbone. Out go the lights. His buddy turns around with a look of total astonishment on his face. I growled and looked at his pal, "You next." He stammered a quick, "No, no" and fled for the door. I had to chuckle a bit. I stepped over a bag of rags in front of me and walked over to Willi, who was by now cramped up with tears in his eyes. I was getting all the action tonight. Made up for being the last one to get a K.O. at Quadra.

There was still a quarter gram left so we celebrated this latest adventure. We just finished tooting back the coke when an amazing apparition happened by the window. It was motorcycle man with a friend and no bike. When they noticed us in the cab we locked the doors, rolled up the windows and began laughing uproariously at them. Motorcycle man glowered at me, "Why don't you come out now, I have someone with me?" But I felt justice had already been done — we didn't need to thump the fuck out of these lames. Then the guy yelled, "Is this your truck?" I nodded, sure it's all mine. And then he reefs off the big mirror on the door. Boy, we come burning out of the truck then. Why we would be considered responsible for any damage, but by the time we got in gear, they had fucked off around the corner and jumped into a waiting car, varoom and were gone. We were half-wrecked anyway and in no sprinting trim. We looked at each other, shook our heads and broke into another fit of laughter. At least they had dropped the mirror so we wouldn't have to buy a new one. Willi smiled, "What a crazy night." The bar was closing and everyone was coming out.

Then nine members of a pseudo-bike gang came swaggering out of step from the closing cabaret (one of them even had a Harley!). With faces flushed with courage and enough

back-up to make the skinniest runt a big hearted brawler, the no-name bikers, in a raucous crowd, approached close enough to recognize us. "Hmmm, nine of them, that should just about make it even," I thought, as I in turn recognize a couple of them who I duked out several weeks before at a party because they had been hassling Carol's girlfriend. These guys were mostly miners who had hired on at the mines after I was fired. So here they were now. Willi turned up the rock and roll and I tuned into those inner drumbeats, working myself into a heat and fighting trim. And I don't have much time because as quick as that they were on us, all at once. But fate and the bunch of our friends, who were slow in leaving the bar and came out with Carole to go partying with us, turned a fair scrap into another rout.

Those fat slobs, one moon-faced son of a bitch pulled off a primer chain he had as a belt and began heaving it in huge wide loops, aiming to take our heads off. Willi held things off; I ran over and retrieved an equalizer of our own; no one had heard of the Marquis of Queensbury here. The fighting had spread all over the parking lot, except that after the first wind the bikers were having to take big gulping air breaks. When chainman got a little tired, Willi gleeped him by the shoulders and held him steady, then I ran up and started driving this guy in the head, the shoulders, the groin and the knees with the sharp side of the mirror. His teeth powdered, blood was spraying all over. This was true justice — Whack — another solid chop to the face. Not due process, but we were getting the point across.

But little did I know that an RCMP car had pulled up just prior to me grabbing the mirror. They must have been watching for some time because they dropped the charges against us — you know, bikers swinging chains attacking honest logger working folk etc. So I put the mirror down when I noticed the cop car right behind me and sauntered over to it. The cop opened the backdoor and said, "Would you mind stepping in?" Realizing I was pinched, I did.

It wasn't even embarrassing anymore. My blood was still high so my action alert awareness circuits were wide open. And what did I see but the good officer's briefcase on the floor beside me. When the cop stepped out to investigate, I was right at it, rifling through for names of informers. Other RCMP cars showed up and then my cop returned mirror in hand. The radio asked, "Who did you pick up?" The cop replied, "Edwards." "What kind of condition is he in?" "He seems O.K., pretty rational." The cop at the other end answered, "He's always like that when you get him in the car." And there was nothing tasty in the briefcase. When we arrived at the station, they searched me and looked for signs of visible drunkenness. When he asked what we were doing, I answered that we were protecting ourselves from the nasty bikers. After about fifteen minutes, he drove me home.

Which made me really suspicious. The mirror was on the front seat beside him, I wondered if somehow my prints weren't on it, and he brought it long so I could incriminate myself by picking it up or something. Does he want me to claim possession of the mirror? All of this was causing me considerable consternation, not being used to police friendliness and such.

When we got to my apartment, I got out and thanked him for the ride. He rolled down the window and said, "Here's your mirror, you don't want to forget this." "It ain't my mirror!" "Well, maybe you can return it to its real owner." "Well, I guess..."

Then everyone showed up at the apartment, minutes after he drove off — Sarge who had been repaired, Holly my girl, who I hadn't seen all day, Willi my bro, Carol and a couple of loose chicks. "Let's go party!" someone yelled and we spun off into the darkness, determined to find it this time around....

Shawn Edwards



In the Face of Things

Unable to sleep
as my neighbour entertains,
the squeaking bedsprings clear
through the plywood wall.

Hoarse whispers: Move it,
move, tighten up.

There was a time when
we were inseparable, ran laps
around the B.C. Pen's dirt yard,
killed days and evenings playing
scrabble for pushups.
We ignored the twenty years
difference between us,
we were indifferent to the shots fired
against the walls of our faces
by a roaring public canon.

Next door they breathe in gasps,
unconcerned about waking me or
what I might think.
One moans with pain and pleasure;
the wall shakes with a thrust.

Last night at my house
you shared cups with my wife,
took my children to see a movie
and then went home alone. Alone.
You felt that years ago,
proposed — indirectly — we share a bed.

I can't remember why
we didn't get around to it.

I had a visit tonight
and my family talked about you,
brought you too alive
with their excited stories. Later,
Maria and I sat under an oak
while the kids played on the swings.
She told me of your struggles
to slip into obscurity
in an alien society.

You feel like a mote
in a hot summer wind.

Cups offer no comfort.

My neighbours grow quiet,
their needs and passions sated again.
They discuss their sex, laugh.
A kiss filters through
like a momentary nightbreeze.

Could I hold you it would be easy.
But there's too much between us
now. All I can give you is this poem
and the warmth of the body
so much more than me.

T. Elton



The Diver

entering prison
on the last day of the year,
is placed in a cell
that is to be his home
for the rest of his life.

No one talks to the diver.
We are resting
for the traditional night of noise and
the quiet of the block is broken
only by an occasional word,
the sound of a cup set down, the
echoing crash as a toilet flushes.

On the windows in front of the cells,
I can see the diver's reflection:
prone on his bunk,
hands folded behind his head —
he is staring at the ceiling.

It is almost twelve; we prepare
for the advent. Hands grip steel
mugs, tin cans, sticks — anything
that will make a noise
when banged against the bars.

Midnight. Out on the Fraser River
boats whistle shrilly.
Our cell bars shed their paint
as we bang and scream.

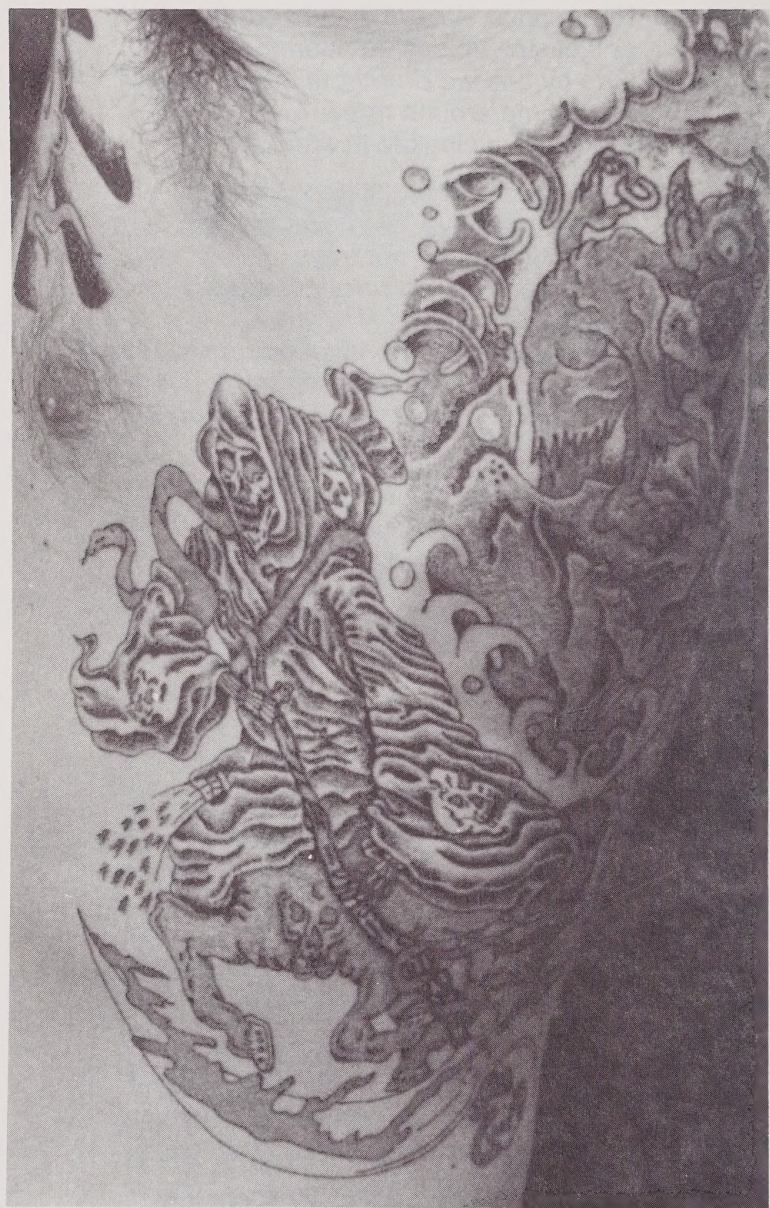
Hundreds release their rage.

Hours pass. We tire, hands cramp
and blister, voices go hoarse.
One by one we drop from the mass until,
some time around three,
the block is cloaked in silence.

Morning, and the cell doors open.
We on "high five" file down the tier
to the kitchen for our trays.
The diver asks his neighbour: are all
nights like that?
and gets his answer in an affirmative nod
by a man who continues on —
ignoring the diver

knifing through the air
to the cement pool below.

T. Elton



Walker's Run

George Walker said, "This is crazy, Rosie. Here we are, three years together: not that it's been a lifetime or anything. Up one road and down another. Even got deported coming home. Where are we going? We're both broke. We set up house again, like we done many times before? And this is the way it ends. This is the shifts, Rosie."

George sat down. Rose sat beside him and took a drink from his glass.

"George, I just don't know anymore. It's just too bizarre. It's just too... I don't know what to say. You've changed, George. You've just become so... so..."

"So crazy! That's the word, isn't it? Crazy. C R A Z Y." Rose was silent. She placed her hand on his knee.

"I give up kid. There's nothing left. I haven't got a family anymore. Mom's been tooting around with that high roller guy for the past five years and hasn't so much as offered an introduction. My sister's on the lam with her bum-fuck friend. The house is gone. There's no work to be found, and we can't collect UIC or welfare. Where the hell is that at? There's nothing left to believe in."

"What am I supposed to do: run around robbing banks for the rest of my life? And for what? I'm getting too old for this type of shit - sticking guns in people's faces and telling them if they don't give me what I want it all ends right here: they can forget about dinner with the in-laws, paying the mortgage, or any other damned thing for that matter. I mean, Christ, it was fun as a kid, but what's the future in it now?"

"Do you blow some guy away because he wants to play hero and try to take a gun away from you: some guy who's

having a good time living before you entered his life? Suddenly, no more kids and good bye wife. That's shit, Rosie. Or maybe it ends as you walk out of the bank into a SWAT team. They blow your ass away before you hit the ground. It happens so fast, you don't even know you're dead."

"And what about you, kid. Half the time, you're not even with me. Half the time you're not even here. My friend, partner and lover: my sometime, somewhere wife. Fuck. Where's it at when you're not even here?"

"There's nothing left for me to believe in, except myself, kid. And I'm not even sure about me anymore. Look at me, kid. At thirty four, a goddamned lush: a drunken-up cosmic cowboy, truckin' the universe in search of that elusive "big score." And what's it lead to , so far; paying the rent for another month? Then back on the trail, and into the void. Where's that at?" He returned the glass to his lips.

"Hon, I can count my friends on less fingers than I've got on one hand. It's a lonely existence, walkin' the world by yourself, kid. I'm tired of it. I quit. Finished. Capish. I want out. I accomplished more for myself when I was in jail than I have in the last eight years of freedom. I can't take this shit anymore, kid; this up and down existence. Where the hell are we going? What's left?"

Rose said nothing. A tear trickled from one eye.

"I'll be leaving tomorrow," George said.

He left and sometime later got picked up by two detectives for questioning.

Detective Roth turned off the ignition. "This is it. Everybody out."

The trio exited the car into the rain slicked alley. The downpour had turned to drizzle. Beyond the North Shore mountains, lightening continued to flash as the storm moved inland.

The lane was spiked by the decaying stumpage of sodden poles, precariously impaled at haphazard angles in the soft crumbling asphalt. A dead cat lay rotting beneath a rusting fire escape. The wind had strewn garbage everywhere.

This city was an oily puddle that reflected iridescent hues as it slunk its way through the putrid rubbish toward a litter plugged drain. The mess had created a multicolored rainbow of floating debris.

Tompkins and Walker leaped the backwater, and stood facing the city jail's "back door," an open bay garage, caverned beneath a drooping entanglement of weatherworn wires. Blue whipped flames caressed its walls.

George advanced. No words were spoken. Rainwater running through the gutters, backed the drone of rush hour traffic.

The single grey door closed noiselessly, revealing the Police Department's cursory tribute to the city's numerous prostitutes: a coral pink interior. Something had changed. Eleven years ago a Commissionaire had sat inside the elevator shuttling prisoners from cells to courtrooms, courtrooms to cells.

"What happened to the old fella that used to run this thing?"

"Died," coughed Tompkins. End of the conversation.

The motor whirred as it began its ascent to the fourth floor booking office. The door opened — limbo enchantment had transfixed the scene for over a decade. Atop the waist high ten foot expanse of lacquered plywood sat a small, handlettered plaque which read, "Reception Desk."

"This must be the place." A ruddy faced guard, one of half a dozen loitering about, swivelled and rose from his slouched position to face the new arrivals.

"Welcome to the show that never ends! How's it going, Grant? Another one for me, I see."

"Now boy, I want everything out of those pockets," he drawled, pointing to the countertop. George complied. The keeper pulled a green, white and pink triplicate form from the drawer, attached it to a clipboard, and laid it before him.

"Name and date of birth, boy?... And don't forget the shoe-laces or belt. I want them too."

George glanced around. After all these years, still the same old boys.

"Come on boy, what's your name?" the guard repeated, twisting the papermate in his right hand.

Walker wanted to say Emmanuel Goldstein.

"Walker, George Payne."

"Date of birth, Walker?"

"June 8th, 1949." His birthday was on the same day that Orwell's book had been released.

"Height?"

"Six foot, zero and a half." The guard looked at him.

"Heavy on the half," he chuckled.

"Weight?"

"One hundred and ninety five pounds."

"Hair?"

"Brown."

"Eyes?"

"Two." The guard looked up again.

"Do you use drugs?"

"Nothing except liquor, coffee, aspirin, tobacco and thinner."

"You an alcoholic?"

"Not yet!"

"Smart guy, eh? Have any distinguishing scars or tattoos?"

The law had changed his appearance. He pointed to his nose.

"Vertical scar on bridge of nose." The guard leaned over the counter, quickly examined the faint, white crease, and notarized it in the appropriate area of the form.

"Anything else?"

"Nothing visible."

"Roll up your sleeves, boy?"

George did. The guard drew a line through the section labelled "Tattoos."

"How much money you got here, Walker?"

"'bout forty dollars."

"...and..." The guard was counting the change, "Fifty six... seven cents."

The detective turned towards the elevator and said, "I'll be back for this fellow in a while. We want to put him in some lineups."

"You'll know where he is," the pudgy guard replied. "What's in the bag?" Without waiting for an answer the guard opened the sack.

"Dirty laundry," said George.

"Hmm, a computerized chess set, and adapter. Planning to stay long?"

"Never know. Perhaps."

"Shaving kit, socks, t-shirt, personal papers, one survival game hat, ever play that game Walker?"

"Every day."

"..cigarettes, lighter and one Playboy magazine." There was no contraband. "Do you want any of this stuff?"

"A couple of packages of cigarettes."

"No problem. We like to keep our guests happy. Mr. Henning, would you be so kind as to accommodate this gentleman?"

A two hundred and fifty pound, uniformed hulk approached the prisoner. "This way, guy," the turnkey motioned.

Walker slumped into a forward pace and saw the same icons, the pair of beige, greased smudged wall phones, the green tiled walls, the matching painted bars, the cement floor, the smoke stained fluorescent lamps, the lamps that resonated a sixty-cycle din. Only when they were out was there a silence so loud that it snapped one's senses. Still.

In this mausoleum time was immune and so were the spirits of the beatings, stabbings, and suicides. Walker guessed that he prisoner's charges had remained the same for the past twenty, fifty or one hundred years. The only difference was that the prisoners seemed to be getting younger.

Thirty steps down the passageway the guard motioned to a vacant solitary cell. He wasn't being placed in one of the eight-celled wings. Wasn't he to be held with the other common criminals? No. The barred door of the small, austere box clanged, clanged shut behind him.

"How about something to eat? I haven't eaten all day." George lied through the door.

"I'll see what I can do," said the keeper. "You're a bit late for dinner. It was an hour ago."

George started to pace. Without a watch, he assumed the time to be about five-thirty. He had walked two miles in his six by eight foot drum before the guard returned carrying a paper plate with roast beef and gravy, a baked potato, peas and carrots.

There weren't going to be any more weekend drunks with Michael or Peter, or any more Saturday drives in search of abandoned farms to photograph; no more Sixty Minutes with Andy Rooney on Sunday evenings and no more private morning orgies with Rosie and the subsequent traditional cheese and mushroom omelettes he so enjoyed. No more hunting or being hunted. Bye bye freedom.

But perhaps now he could find peace of mind and solitude to write and compose. Outside life had left him little time. He would continue to be the observer. Nothing is constant but change, but oh, what a radical change. The void, living death, this was it: absence.

"You Walker?"

"Ya."

"Come on." The door swung open. George followed the turnkey to the desk. The rest had done him good. Tompkins had returned.

"I'm taking this fellow down to the lineup." The detective escorted George by the arm.

"Whoa," bellowed the guard. "Not before signing for him." He passed a clipboard across the counter. The detective signed the waiver and commented, "You guys would think I am stealing him." He winked.

"Never know."

"You want him more than we do."

The detective pushed number 3 on the stainless steel panel.

"Did they feed you?"

"Ya, wasn't bad either."

"Most of our clients eat better in here than when they're on the streets." Walker knew it was true. Tompkins spoke the word "clients" with indifference. Walker approved of that quality. It was rare to find in a policeman.

Tompkins continued, "I want you to know that as far as we're concerned, you're just another filler for the lineup."

"You told me that on the way over. You informing me or trying to convince me?" Their eyes met, but there was no reply.

"It won't take long. After it's all over, I'll pick you up and take you downstairs to our office. Joe and I want to ask you some questions. OK?"

George was resigned. He knew lineups were intended for more than preliminary identification. No way of knowing, but he felt the worst. After all, there were over two hundred eligibles already being held in custody. Why had they waited for him to be included?

The elevator opened. There were other men attired in civilian garb standing around, and two, blue shirted guards present.

"See you in a while," said Tompkins. The elevator closed.

"Walker gazed at a group of three men huddled in one corner beneath a cloud of blue smoke. They were concealed in the shadow of a burnt-out fluorescent light. He approached the trio, vaguely recognizing one of the faces camouflaged beneath a month's unkempt growth of whiskers and greasy, shoulder-length hair.

"Jesus Christ! Is that you, Dave?"

Two heads turned towards George. The addressee slowly raised his head to meet the inquiry.

"Not me," came the curt reply. "Don't know who you're talking about."

George was shocked. As though uninterrupted, the trio resumed their conversation. His hunch had been reaffirmed by the man's familiar voice, yet he intuitively shut up.

Walker had not seen Dave Finney since he left prison a decade before. From what he remembered of him, Dave had always been held in high esteem as an elegant dresser,

ladies man, and a gentleman. Now, he was a dreg of the lower pit, teeth rotten and stained, his fingernails split and broken. The one time youthful and athletic posture had broken down to a disfigured, bowed slump, with a permanent hobble from a partially crippled right leg. It was pathetic.

"What's your name?" he asked, regarding Dave with a solemn eyed intensity. A pause punctuated each word.

"Shawn O'Bannion." Shawn was Dave's middle name.

George knew that the streets, jails and prisons were full of people who had changed their names. Some wished their pasts were erased; some wished they could forget themselves. Chameleons, people scuttling between the stamping boots of their environment. Everyone did it. George had, although he had never changed his name. It was all a matter of degree.

His attention settled on a man sitting cross legged on the floor, his back resting against the wall. His shoes were shiny. He had not been in custody long. He too had another familiar face.

"Do I know you?" The man glanced up swiftly, and returned his excited eyes to the butt littered floor.

"Shhh... don't say anything," he whispered, fidgeting.

Perplexed George looked at the expressionless faces of the guards. They were caught up in a soft dialogue, but he could not decipher their lip movements. Just what the hell was going on here. He was agitated.

Two knocks came from the door at the far end of the room. It signalled the start of the sessions. The tall guard turned towards the prisoners.

"OK, men. I want you all to put your cigarettes out and file into a single line." He pointed along the base of one wall. "There is to be no talking in the lineup." When we enter the room, you will turn to the left and proceed on the black line to the far end. You will then face towards the glass. OK, let's go."

The men shuffled into formation and entered the adjacent room. George studied the strange surroundings. Three white painted walls and opposite him ten, floor and ceiling mounted,

evenly spaced floodlights. Fastened behind them were five foot high one way mirrored panels.

On the rear wall were painted five, horizontal black lines that began five feet from the floor.

"Just like the movies," George thought. The instructions continued.

"Now men, when I say turn, you will make a ninety degree turn to your left. I'll repeat the instructions three times. Each time you will turn ninety degrees. After you've done that and returned to your original position, I'll say walk. In turn, each of you, beginning at the far end, will walk around the room returning in front of the line to his original position. Does everyone understand? Are there any questions?"

There were none.

"Alright, everyone face forward."

From the opposite side of the glass could be heard the sound of footsteps entering the viewer's gallery. It was followed by the sound of a closing door.

"Are you ready, Mr. Timmins?" asked the instructor to another guard stationed behind the mesh covered floor. Only the instructor heard the answer.

The spotlights snapped on, flooding the area in brilliance and bathing the prisoners in twenty-five hundred watts of clear, white light. The men stood squinting their blinded eyes. The first order came.

"Turn." Ten seconds passed.

Facing the front, Walker felt uncomfortable. Beads of sweat began to form on his forehead, his heart pumped faster, and he could feel the adrenalin squirting through his veins. His knees began to quiver. He breathed deeply, slowly; it helped.

"Now to the left: Once around the room." The guard stirred a clockwise motion with his finger.

After the door was securely latched shut from the outside, the prisoners were allowed to return to the back for a cigarette and a glass of water.

There were seven more sessions over the following hour and a half. Finally it ended. Everyone, including the guards,

was soaked in sweat. The prisoners were herded to the rear holding pens.

Returning to the top floor, George and the three men who he had met in the corner huddle were separated from the rest of the group and placed in the drunk tank.

Although the interior of the chartreuse cell was dimly lit, George could discern a sprawling figure in one corner. He was unconscious, his face scraped and bloodied, his clothes worn and torn. Urine pooled from beneath him to a hole at the centre of the room. A dank, putrid air.

"Guy's drunk or dead. Smells like a fucking sewer in here."

"Where'd they take those other guys?"

"Them?" grinned a baby faced kid. "Where you been man? They are the fillers. You know—the civies. Dig? They're all pigs... cops man."

"I thought you was one of them too," added the punk, tapping his toe to the ground. "And that's why you guys were all in one corner."

"That's it. Don't trust none but your own," added Finney.

"Not even them," murmured Walker.

Tompkins escorted George out to another room. The indirect illumination distorted the room's dimensions. In the centre, an elongated, u-shaped table dominated the main floor-space. It was surrounded by auditorium style chairs. In the fold of the design a projector sat atop a rollaway cart facing the podium. Roth had returned, entered the hall and was sitting at the rear in a swivel chair next to the table.

"Come in and be seated," he beckoned to Walter.

Tompkins momentarily bowed off to a side room, returning with two cups of coffee.

"Coffee?" he asked, looking at Walker.

"Please. Cream, no sugar."

Tompkins placed the two cups on the table, disappeared, and returned with another.

"Thanks." Walker took the cup in his hand.

"Have a chair," Roth motioned. Tompkins took a seat opposite Roth on the inside of the table. Walker sat beside Roth facing Tompkins. Roth began the conversation.

"This is a bitch, George. How the hell did you get into this one?"

Tompkins breathed a deep sigh as Walker placed a finger to his chin. He was biting his lip.

"If you think you've got a problem, you ought to see it from my side. Let's begin with your getting here."

Walker told his story of not being able to find work, collect UIC or welfare, and, thus, returning to crime. When George asked Roth what he would do in such a downspin, there was no reply.

George yielded to the police that he had driven the car used in the getaway and that he had "solicited" it from a local automobile dealership. He asked that the car theft not be included in the document of charges. The car had not been damaged and he had put half a tank of gas in it. Anyway an additional charge would only tie up the courts further. Tompkins and Roth nodded together. An old story.

"Who had planned the robbery?" they asked. Walker laid claim. "What about the route taken from the bank?" Walker described it, in detail. Would he mind retracing the route with the detectives. Sure, no objections. Walker claimed that he had met his accomplices in a downtown bar. Roth looked at him doubtfully. Tompkins was content. It was an open and shut case. They didn't ask questions concerning the guns involved.

They took notes. Near the end, Roth once again asked his subject when the crime was committed. Walker momentarily contemplated, then replied.

"It couldn't have been in December, that's when I was going crazy. It must have been earlier... perhaps late October or early November."

He had a bemused expression on his face. There had been so many, he had forgotten the date.

"Interesting," said Roth. He opened a portfolio that was lying on the desk. From it he produced a VISA card payment receipt. It indicated that a payment had been made on October eighteenth. The same day that the bank had been robbed. The sum was one thousand dollars.

"My God," said Walker. "Where'd you get that from?" He immediately recognized what it was.

"From the back of your wallet," said Tompkins, shaking his head.

Walker laughed aloud.

"You're kidding?"

He wondered if he had placed it there, subconsciously knowing that it would one day be used as evidence against him. He had done such things before. Perhaps success wasn't there unless it was tailed by an invitation to destruction. He liked to tempt fate. The old cat and mouse game.

"No, you're not kidding are you?" he asked as he rested his elbows atop the table, hands folded. He dropped his chin, his mouth agape. He licked his lips. He was tired. The answer was obvious.

Tompkins stood, then walked around the side of the table occupied by Walker and Roth. He stepped behind George. On the wall was affixed a four foot by eight foot map, indicating a street schematic of the greater Vancouver area. Inserted in it were sixteen coloured and numbered pins, each connected to others with various lengths of white thread.

"See this map, George? We are with homicide and not the robbery squad. This thing was just dumped into our laps, so we don't know much about it. What we do know is that they believe all of these robberies were committed by the same group of people, over a brief period of time, shortly before last Christmas." Walker looked at the pins and their locations.

"Your bank is number seven, George. Right here." He pointed to the pin.

"Incredible," George said.

"How much money you get from the bank?" asked the detective.

"A little over ten thou'."

"Uh huh. Altogether, there's been over one hundred and twenty thousand dollars that's never been recovered. What do you think of that, George?"

"Disgusting!" exclaimed George, his face animated, eyes crinkled into a smile. He was surprised at the figure.

"Surely you don't think I've got that kind of money, do you?" He held open his soiled down vest with his thumbs. Tompkins continued.

"The bank you robbed went down October the eighteenth; the same day you paid this VISA receipt." He studied George with an indifferent coldness.

"Ya, it was paid in ones, twos and fives," sputtered George. "Even the teller thought it a bit strange when I told her that I'd won it in a poker game."

"You know what bothers me," said Roth. "You rob the bank, then give them back the money. Why?" He looked at George intently.

"Believe it or not, I really care about my credit rating. Sounds silly doesn't it. I even mailed my credit cards back to Rosie, just before coming in here, hoping that she'll keep up the payments while I'm gone. Can you believe that? Speaking of which, what do you think I will be getting out of all this?"

"Oh, probably ten years, maybe eight, if you're lucky." Walker was neither upset nor shocked. His record raced far into the past, he had already prepared himself.

"That much, eh?" He was at a loss for words.

"I've heard of borrowing from Peter to pay Paul," said Roth, "but this is something else again: robbing John to pay John." Walker didn't find anything extraordinary about it at all. That was one of the differences between them.

George Walker



Correction's Women

her firm uniform
of determination
set doll's face, prow forward
in a man's ocean.

from welfare's sloppy couch
clear eyes see the essential
paycheck,
"Yes! I'll pull that fatal trigger too."

A new way of relating
we have, she thinks.
My femininity will bridge the wide con gap,
SMILE. beacon out to the unknown ocean,
again, SMILE — he smiles back
See! and light chat-flirt, the erosion of dikes
she thinks.

Old Bull, scaly and encrusted with
the cynic's truth, says, "You watch, they'll be screwing
them next, *I Know*." he snorts
face age hard.

Correcting woman can be neutra-sex surveillance robot
or girl-next-door coy eyes,
or severe mother.
enlightened and objective she signed up
on the list
saying her boot will stomp firmly down on the human face,
if required.

Old Bull bitter
doesn't believe it,
"They haven't got the balls."
training films are just movies
and bullseyes are made of paper.

but firm face or not
she hears her baby crying
a job doesn't have to be my occupation
it won't come to that
it won't happen to me —
I'll just settle down until the uniform fits.

Jan. 1984
John Abbott



The Complete Angler

He is an expensive friend
who throws the lures,
the one who spins those light expansive dreams,
of power,
when we're in such a powerless position,
in prison.

I longed that his eyes not gleam
so yacht rich and palm shadowed
of those young Thai girls he will adopt
to rub in his every whim,
when he is let out.

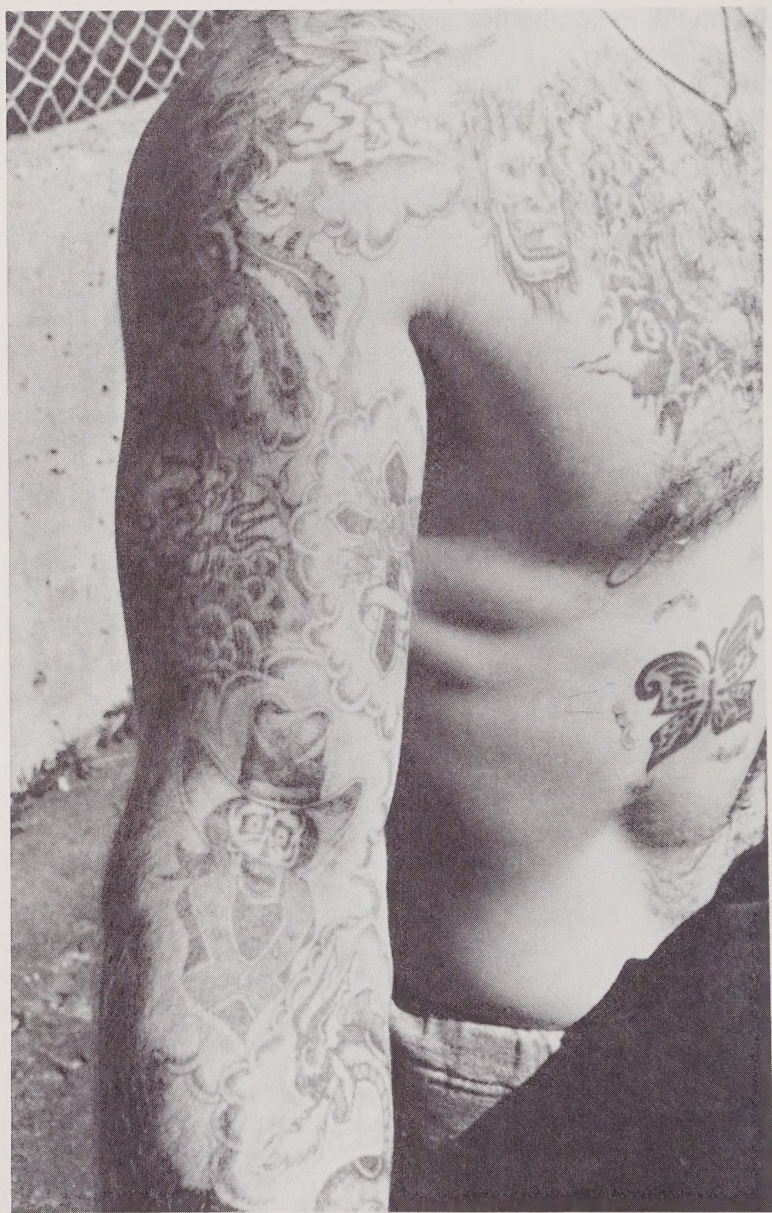
Scuba diving down the coral reefs,
Not dead but living stones
he says, the rainbowed fish
are tame to touch —
we only spear what we can eat
beside the fire, the celluloid night,
with those careless girls between us.

The track around the yard runs licking fingertips
to Sugar Loaf mountain and tropical kisses:
Out there it only rains at night
and the native message is a polygamous ancient art.
He smiles past me as the colours flash by.

Remember not the tear of the hook in our gums,
the shud of the club on the back of a slick head,
the breath starved frenzy
pinioned in the gillnet.

He means to soothe me, signalling quietly
Forget, Forget,
He is an expensive friend because he has bought all of his
dreams.

18 June, 1984
John Abbott



The Washington Redskins are the Red Brigades of the National Football League

"He's just another doublespeak tool for the capitalist swine." David looked away from the Channel 7 newscaster towards Rad's agitated face. The contrast between the well scrubbed pink newsman droning on about the penalties of drunk driving and death, and Rad's closely set John Lennon glasses perched on his yellowed wedge face defined another facet of the class struggle.

"See, that's just a new reason to stop and search the people!" Rad continued. Dave's eyes drifted back to the coloured orb of the TV. A heavy State Trooper had corralled a citizen on the highway shoulder. He was holding his long thick black flashlight equivocally under the man's nose. Dave understood exactly what the trooper was saying beneath his neutral request for the man's licence: move slowly and do exactly as I say or I'll smash your teeth. How easy it would be to get defaced because of a sudden nervous movement out in the dark shadows like that — then Rad's comments were a little less the tired cliches of the Marxist-Leninist phrase book.

"They put this on so that the people will have confidence, will think that someone cares about them. All the while the capitalists peel away life from the worker."

Rad was a young man of twenty-six years. He had been in various 'correctional facilities' since he was sixteen. Once he had told Dave how many months he had been free, but Dave couldn't remember exactly how short that had been, maybe a summer vacation. As Dave looked into Rad he wondered if this Left-Bloc cant allowed Rad a secure position from which he could absolutely reject everything that had been done to

him. And why not? Being in prison for all one's adult life certainly would not cultivate any confidence in the status quo.

Curt, the third TV watcher, spoke out. He had been slumped heavily against the wall, on the bed beside Rad.

"Well, who is the worker? Everyone's got a colour TV and a car nowadays."

Rad lifted his head out of the "Thinker's" pose. "She is!" and he pointed at a plump postal worker who was being interviewed by a camera on the tube. "She is a worker."

"Oh I don't know. My cousin has a job in the Post Office, does just about nothing all day except gossip and guess what's in exotic letters and has enough to fly out to Hawaii any weekend with her friends."

Curt worked the 5:30 AM to 1:30 PM shift as a short order cook, and the idea that a plump postal employee was a worker, given his equation of work with sweat, boredom and sore feet, seemed wildly unnatural. His shift was over and he was quite tired by then, so his comments lacked much force. Rad plunged to cut him off.

"So she's a white collar worker. Anyway, she's just another cog in the capitalist's machine."

At that moment a commercial for Christmas appeared on the TV screen. This one featured the expensive British look; the camera panned across dark shiny gloves, the horny shaped pipe and finally a black riding crop. Obviously these were Christmas gifts that any centerline woman who truly wanted to please her corporate man would offer in festive appreciation. Dave felt that that combination was ritualistically grotesque, like taking one's children to see a famous assassin's knife at the museum, but he also felt the hidden hand of subtler beings amidst the film editors. But maybe really effective advertising worked on that level too, reaching out, shiny on the surface and provocative within for the stiff and the living room intellectual. A chill settled in like a sudden fog as Dave wondered if he had been netted, but as surely as the sun comes up, the commercial flashed out and Curt rumbled out with a laboriously collected reply.

"Yeh, but in communist countries you can't even say anything or they'll snatch you off to the Gulags. Or you, YOU, they'll put a bullet through the back of that skinny neck." And he pointed at Rad.

Rad looked like an intent squirrel as his tobacco browned fingers twirled another home rolled smoke.

"That's because those countries are so unsure of their own people. They have to do that. If they don't shoot, then the disgruntled will rise up. You see?" and he looked quizzically at Curt.

Curt didn't see. He rolled his thick shoulders and shook his head.

"So it is better here than it is there. You can go out onto our streets and say any damn thing."

"That's it — as long as what you say doesn't mean anything and doesn't influence the people, then they won't come and take you away. The established order is well established. You better believe that they come down quickly if you started to change things."

Dave remembered how the Chicago Police had solved the local Black Panther equality problem by gunning down Freddie Hampton and his pal while they were asleep in bed. Of course, of course, the circumstances are different; they always are. Which left him knowing, as usual, that nothing is for sure and that his faith in the inconsistency of things remained undamaged. Who are they? Who are the capitalists and once we have identified them, would we be any different if we lived in their houses? What had been said about Eichmann — the banality of evil, and then there was the politician's generous friend, the used-car salesman who has multiplied his fortune into the hundreds of millions and now sells stadiums and blocks downtown instead of tin, regrooved tires and hand-crafted odometer readings. Wouldn't that cop cruising the neighbourhood cease to be ominous and instead take on the benign aura of a fireman, just making it his duty to save our stuff. Hmmm. Dave felt he was honest enough with himself to know he wouldn't be much different, possibly

prouder and more arrogant, so it was O.K. that he wasn't the boss or Chairman of the Politburo.

Another pretty girl blossomed on the screen. As her flawless face grew and shimmered with production's tender loving care, their discussion evaporated and Dave, Curt and Rad gazed together in a soundless harmony at this welcome apparition. We all love you, they all thought for varying amounts of time.

Rad broke the spell. "Garbage! Turn the channel and get the Public TV station. I don't want to allow this pollution any room in my mind." He grimaced and contorted his face as he demonstrated an exorcism of cute capitalism.

As ownership predicates control, even in prison, Dave reached over and spun the dial. Various untamed-tamed faces blurred in and out of the cross channel static until he finally found himself amidst a herd of walruses lumpily lying on a pebble beach.

"This must be PBS!" The commentator, a famous old stage cowboy, was describing the crucial role that the walruses play in the ecological chain, but because Dave, Curt and Rad had just arrived on this particular beach they could only guess what that significant role was.

"My uncle had a long curved pendant that a sailor had given him which was made out of walrus horn," Curt announced.

"I heard that they used to render the walruses down into lamp-oil and machine grease," Rad responded.

"The Chinese pay considerable sums for powdered walrus tusk because they believe it is an aphrodisiac and general elixir of life," Dave added.

"Yeh, but the chinamen also spend big money on bird's nest soup, hundred year old rotten eggs and ginseng root." Such a casual extravagance of money by the Chinese on such exotica had obviously caused their level of cultural development sink to a new low in Curt's eyes. This, however, had exhausted their supply of orientallia so the three moved in another direction.

"The Redskins are the Red Brigades of the National Football League!" Rad blurted out. "Their offence is consistent and I *know* that they'll score forty points at least against the New York pygmies. No one can keep the hogs out!"

Dave was uncomfortable with the placidity of the walruses, so he scanned across to Channel Five, the Seahawk station. The weekly game was only four days away; there just might be some news about injuries. And then he came back to what Rad had just said — not that it made any theoretical sense, but there was something in it. After the terrorists had set off another bomb, the world news covered the bloody debris and the faces of the weeping widows, but there were almost never any play-by-play action shots; no instant replays of the visceral impact of bullets on human body matter; no precise formations sweeping through the opposition in slow motion and it was so hard to identify the players — violent politics would have to work on its professional technique before it could rival the NFL for their attention.

Click. He had the news. Her smile jumped like an elastic across her flesh tone mask and she began describing the situation as news, down at a local production plant: "InCorp-Cor management has locked out all three thousand and seven of their employees this morning. Last night the employee union, I.M.P., refused to accept a 15% annual wage decrease, which had been demanded by management in the spirit of restraint and trimming the fat. This morning at 10 AM in District Court, on request from the management lawyers, Judge DiLadrone placed a restraining order on picketting while the lockout continues. Sources at the Capital suggest that the Labour Code will be changed shortly to reflect the government's support of restraint. Non-unionized labour is being hired at the Employment Exchange. In case any of our listeners are interested, their number is 734-5900."

Curt grumbled, "Might as well fire them all. The unions just drain off dues to New Jersey or someplace, while caving into the company demands on some sweetheart deal. Look at the NFL strike — they just lost a lot of money for nothing. No wonder the Japs are beating us with a stick!"

Dave remembered Curt's bad luck with the bookie.

"If you could only pick the winners with the consistency that you pick the losers, you could quit your job and holiday down in Grenada."

"Yeh well, I don't know anything about football, and anyway you only just broke even yourself," Curt retorted. He felt pretty sensitive about his money-making ability as it was indelibly linked to his masculine image of himself.

Rad broke in, "I've won all of my parlays. Every one of them!"

"Well where's the money?"

"I just bet a sawbuck each time, that ain't much." As quickly as he had blown up, Rad deflated. He hunched over and was staring at the tip of his burning cigarette again.

Curt turned on Rad, "With all of that bread you ought to buy yourself a new shirt. Like which are the tears and which is the material? That's New Wave, eh. And what's your safety pin doing? Nothing!" and he leaned back, quite satisfied with his sally.

Rad twitched and had a short shoulder spasm. "This isn't New Wave. New Wave is mainstream. This is real Punk. Punk does not compromise."

"What the hell is Punk?" Curt hadn't shaved or changed his greasy cook's smock. "If any punker spits in my face on some social protest, I'll break his teeth out on the curb."

"No Curt, listen. Punk is music, it's a state of mind, it's anarchy and rebellion against the established bullshit."

"Yeh, well that rebellion is fine, but if it doesn't put any money in my pocket I don't want to hear about it." Curt settled back and relaxed.

Rad poured around the rock. "No, it's not like that. That's the way the mainstream is — the only songs that get on the radio are by the corporate bands, just formula rock that doesn't mean a thing except money."

Curt heard an opening, "But the money is the real reason, now nobody's going to tell me that these bands play just to get a message across."

"But they do," Rad had twisted right around to face the current, "Like *The Specials*. They've got twelve members in their band, that's a twelve way split. And they never get any airtime over here. Wait! I'll go get my tape."

Rad left to fetch his music and prove his point.

Dave and Curt both smiled indulgently at each other.

"Old Rad can't wait for the Revolution," Dave said.

"Yeh, he's all wound up about the capitalists," Curt laughed shallowly. Dave looked over at him and thought that Curt probably didn't understand that much about capitalism and the surplus value of labour, but as often as not, Rad, by his very vehemence and the stock quality of his lines, was unintentionally humourous when he meant to be didactically serious. Accordingly Rad had become very touchy to the jibes and smiles of his chums to the point of being temperamental. Dave wanted to humour him tonight.

But that wasn't really that fair either. Part of Dave felt his own worldly cynicism was almost bankrupt in the face of Rad's simple earnestness. Rad believed, and he believed in a direction that Dave sympathized with, but, as Curt recognized, Rad as the Red Don Quixote tilting at the TV was hardly going to polarize the masses. Dave, on the other hand, was too proud to take a standpoint which could be made to look so easily ridiculous.

As Rad slid through the metal doorway, Dave turned down the TV set. Rad put his little black tapedeck down and pushed the red button.

"Listen to this."

The TV still glowed and flickered as bluff good-looking men quaffed lite beer and thumped each other on the back — but they had no volume. Rad's music began.

A dark reggae voice announced, "Court is in session. My name is Judge Roughneck. Rude Bwai, you have been brought in front of me charged with smashing this woman's window..." The chorus sang, "Naked woman, naked man, where did you get that nice suntan..."

"You see," Rad exclaimed, "They would never put anything like that on mainline radio. It's too political."

Dave looked down at his dirty tennis shoes, wondering if they were political too. Probably. Sweatshops in Korea and Taiwan, lackeys of US corporate imperialism, which made him an indirect supporter of the military-industrial complex. And so it went. Curt looked over at Dave and said flatly,

"What's so political about busting a window and some broad's suntan?"

"It's got social content," Rad replied. "Punk is the real music of the workers. It doesn't hynotize you: it wakes you up to break out of the mold."

But the name of the song was 'Stupid Marriage' and without any more being said, Dave turned the TV back up. Army Rangers were jumping out of helicopters to the tune of the jingle, 'Rangers do it the hard way — If you want to find your direction, find your nearest Army recruitment office.' Flags were waving. The well composed matron's eyes were watering as her son, in full dress uniform, saluted a formation of low flying nuclear bombers. Thinking aloud, Dave said, "I'd rather watch football."

J. Pilon



No Escape

i gather all the pens
i can find
suck the ink
from each one

bury ashes
of burnt paper
pencils poems
dictionary thesaurus

but words crawl
from the damp soil
finding their way
back to my room

Cathy Wall

Obsessions

the deep hole
tries to swallow me
while you heave
black, heavy earth
over my body

this is the third
time you've tried
to bury me

but during the night
i crawl from
the moist ground
into your bed
soiling the sheets
again

Cathy Wall

Philosophies of Coloring Books

our child asked
why things had to die
and we told her
try coloring
inside the lines

when purple elephants
& blue giraffes
couldn't hold her
interest anymore
she asked
when she would die

we told her
not to worry
about staying
inside the lines

Cathy Wall



Interview: Gerry Hannah

In the Summer and Fall of 1982, a variety of events occurred which were subsequently claimed by "direct action". These included the bombing of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir B.C. Hydro electric substation, the bombing of the Litton Industries missile guidance factory in Toronto, and a number of arson attacks on outlets of the Red Hot Video chain. In January of 1983, the police (RCMP) announced that they had captured, on the Squamish Highway, the "direct action cell" responsible for those actions. The police further indicated that this guerilla unit had planned a Brinks Armored Car robbery, the sabotage of a Gulf Oil icebreaker, and an attack on the Canadian Air Force base at Cold Lake, Alberta. In 1984, after one year of pre-trial imprisonment, the alleged members of "direct action" (the "Vancouver Five") pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery; possession of explosives, unregistered weapons and stolen property; and the use of explosives. Ann Hansen received a life sentence, Brent Taylor twenty years (and at this time has a further trial pending in Toronto for the Litton bombing), Julie Belmas twenty years, Gerry Hannah ten years, and Doug Stewart six years.

Gerry Hannah was sent to the Matsqui Federal Penitentiary in Abbotsford, British Columbia, where he was interviewed by John Abbott in the summer of 1984. In this interview, Gerry Hannah describes some of the routes that led him to direct action, and shares his motivations and what he did about them. The 1982 "direct action" campaign was the first of its kind in Canada and was intended to be part of an educational process. Prison itself is a process of education

and politicization and it is appropriate that this interview be part of the *Prison Journal*. The distance Gerry Hannah has travelled only highlights the "Long March" that he feels is still required.

JA: So you started out playing for a punk band?

GH: Ya. The *Subhumans*. The *Subhumans* and *DOA* were the original punk bands in Vancouver

JA: I remember listening to Jello Biafra and the Dead Kennedys down on the street in San Francisco. Jello Biafra was politically involved.

GH: Sure. Jello came and visited me in Okalla. He's a good guy. He is politically aware. Although the rest of the band, well, I guess they're aware but not really into it. I brought environmental awareness, you know, a feeling for the eco-system, the wonder of the wilderness to him. Made him more conscious of the importance of that, because, you know, punk is very urban oriented.

JA: You could call it downtown nihilism.

GH: Sure, it's really an urban thing, and I'm more a person of the woods. Shit, it pisses me off, what is happening with the wilderness. I've seen B.C. logging, Weyerhaeuser and them, up by Prince George. The clear-cut stretches as far as the eye can see...

JA: Don't they have a policy of keeping a scenic patch of trees alongside the tourist roads?

GH: Ya. They keep the valleys that the highways roll through forested, but the next valley and the next, why it's just complete devastation. They've got no shame up in Prince George — everyone works at the two huge mills, they have to keep going. The eco-system is thrown completely off balance: the snow level in winter increases, like doubles, every animal is affected. Dead logs, the stuff they don't drag out, are lying everywhere. The animals have trouble moving about. No one up there gives a shit.

JA: It's more important to have that job. The mortgage and the house...

GH: The attitudes of some of the grassroots environmentalists piss me off too. Like that Valhalls trip, their heart is in the right place but it comes down to this with them: we're really familiar with this area; we think it is a beautiful little place and so if you could just go log somewhere else then it will be OK. Every little valley says just log somewhere else and so on and so on. We can't keep passing the buck. If environmental groups are really interested in a world solution, then they'd realize this band-aid approach is no good. It comes down to: is it jobs or do we retain the natural world?

JA: But how would Prince George stay Prince George if there was no lumber industry up there?

GH: It couldn't. It would have to shrink. People would have to change their lifestyle. Interdependency with nature needs to be reestablished. The people must remove themselves from a consumer society. Right now we are moving away from nature. The more sophisticated we think we are, the more we move away from nature. Knowledge at the expense of the whole eco-system is not worth it.

JA: How does the grip of big business get removed though?

GH: An alternative society has to be created. Not like the hippies who just fucked off into the woods in the 60's — unfortunately they cut themselves right off and lost contact with reality. There are alternatives, like that farm in the States.

JA: You mean "The Farm" down in Tennessee?

GH: Ya. They've got the whole thing together, but the important thing is that you can't cut yourself off. It doesn't have to be a communal environment, but that does work — things go better in groups.

JA: There is a utopian communal tradition in North America. It's not new. Have you read any Thoreau?

GH: I've got "Walking" and the one by the pond someplace. Sure, but what we've got to do is opt out of consumer society

while maintaining political contacts. I don't mean voting for the Conservative or Liberal party or any bullshit like that, but affinity groups, groups sharing similar views getting together and educating the people as to how it is necessary to change. Change from exploitation and domination to sharing together. It is a mistake to hippie-like drop out and live as a hermit or as collective hermits. They haven't done anything to change people's attitudes — the bulldozer will still show up at their door.

JA: You see that as a problem, this hippie drop out?

GH: Ya, and the other distasteful thing is those that have stayed within society while still saying that they're environmentally aware, that it's still OK for them to live in the city.

JA: Actually you'll find that most environmental support is in the cities, a romantic longing.

GH: Ya. The first I ever heard of the Carolin Mine dumping was down in Vancouver. The people up at Hope don't appear to give a fuck about Carolin mines — they're tied to the situation, if they talk they'll lose their jobs. So it is mostly just people from Vancouver. Ya, it's all the same thing back East in the Junction Triangle, people being boxed into a poisonous environment that's killing them slowly because the area is close to work and has schools and it's too expensive to move.

JA: How do you get people exposed to alternative information?

GH: That's pretty hard. It's not a fad anymore to take off and live in the woods. All the media attention to people moving out is gone. "Sea Shepherd" and "Green Peace", the major environmental groups, are not pushing that idea at all. And the media is bought, sold and owned by big corporate business.

JA: Well, as far as the grassroots action against development and pollution is concerned there are other alternatives. I read a book called *The Milagro Beanfield War* about a valley in New Mexico where the greedy Anglo developers were

trying to squeeze out the local Mexican farmers who had been working the land for hundreds of years. Finally the locals got together and began sabotaging the development.

GH: Ya. Whatever is effective. That is direct action. That's OK and if that kind of move is necessary then that's what should be done. Like up at the Stikine River Project something like that happened — surveying equipment, tents, radios, camps and stuff were destroyed. But B.C. Hydro has millions. Even the bombing only slowed it down. It is not going to stop it, just delay it. Continued acts of sabotage may stop it, but the important thing is to bring attention to the Project. When the majority of society understands the total situation, then the Project would be stopped.

JA: One example of that kind of thing would be the mass action at Narita in Japan against the new airport. It was a union of the small local farmers and the radical students.

GH: And there was one in Germany or France somewhere, near an airbase. They didn't stop it but delayed it. In my opinion none of these projects should exist. But because only a few of them get any attention, only a few of them are struggled against. The common people don't have the access to resources or information to do it.

JA: They don't have the clout.

GH: Ya. The media is controlled by the State and the Corporations, both by the back door, greasing each other's hands, and up-front, like who can afford to buy advertising except the State and the Corporations. So who gets listened to? And the media has tunnel vision — it only sees in one direction, it doesn't present alternatives. Even those wildlife shows only touch on it. Sure they show this and that species, like forest elk, for example, running around with radio collars around their necks, but they don't touch on the real problem, the attitudes, which make it OK to make a parking lot out of the woods, turn wilderness into an industrial park. The real problem is this idea that continued progress is good. Like who sold this to everyone? We must remove the tumor, not just put

some pretty band-aid on it. Business people — the State, is responsible for wiping out all the species. They're only interested in profits, advancement to the next executive rung up, and dividends. Many don't give a fuck about barrenground caribou being wiped out by a pipeline. Lorne Greene and the others are only talking to themselves.

JA: It's like a half hour of concerned liberal guilt.

GH: Ya. Venting, a valve to let off the people's frustrations and paranoia. Same as the Vancouver Peace March — once a year everyone concerned about nuclear megadeath dresses up and goes out for the one-day-Peace-March-and-picnic, then they go home. It allows the people to think that something has happened, but nothing has. In fact, I think the State is happy about it.

JA: You mean the energy is thereby carefully channelled in some harmless direction?

GH: Sure. We all know that nuclear war will wipe us out. There's a lot of potential energy out there. But now it is time to do something about it — the time for talking is over. It is time for solutions.

JA: What solutions?

GH: De-centralized anti-authoritarian societies. No collective process occurs in the big city. Something along anarchist principles. I'm not a marxist. It just can't work, you know — a vanguard of fifty or one hundred and fifty, seizing the vital points and then calling on the people to join. I'm against that...

JA: You mean in a manner similar to the Bolsheviks?

GH: Ya. Like that. It has got to be something where you persuade the mass of the people and they rise up and overthrow the State themselves.

JA: A process of education...

GH: Ya. Not setting up committees to run society. I believe in anarchy.

JA: Do you have any particular anarchist books that you've read which have affected you?

GH: I've read lots of the old anarchist writings. They're mostly about class exploitation in industrialized societies. But when you're talking about removing the industrial set-up totally, this old worker / boss struggle becomes irrelevant. We need decentralized nonauthoritarian societies that function in harmony with nature. The first book I read after I got busted was Berkman's *Prison Memoirs*. And I've read Malatesta, Emma Goldman, some Kropotkin but not much, and George Orwell. Now he actually leaned more towards the anarchist position than anyone else although many people didn't seem to know that.

JA: *Homage to Catalonia* was an excellent book. It is quite interesting how Orwell went down to the International Labour Party recruiting office to join up and ended up getting into the POUM militia instead of the Communist sponsored International Brigades. It would have been a different book otherwise.

GH: Ya. The POUM was a Trotskyist organization, not really anarchist like the Spanish CNT organization.

JA: Did you read that *Iron Column* pamphlet that came in the mails a few months ago?

GH: No. I haven't gotten around to it.

JA: Well, the author was a prisoner who got liberated when the anarchist militia broke down the prison gates and freed all the prisoners. He joined up with them and went off into the mountains to fight the fascists.

GH: Not much chance of that happening here.

JA: How did you get into the anarchist thing?

GH: I've always questioned authority, felt rebellious. I always questioned why others tell me what to do on a whim; that started at quite an early age. I could understand my Ma telling me what to do, but...anyway I never really put my ideas into a sound political philosophy until I bumped into the anarchists in Vancouver, and then it clicked.

JA: It clicked when you went out and did something about it.

GH: Ya, but it took me three years while I was doing my music, the punk, before I got around to doing something about it. I never really intended to go underground, that was something that happened on short notice, like when the Litton bombing occurred and we found out that Julie's voice was on tape. Then it was a good time to disappear. Anyway, I guess it began for me after Julie and I moved up to Jasper. We loved the Rockies and I wanted to work as a snow-cat operator. But it turned out that Jasper was the worst place to move to: it turned out that it was a completely sick little capitalistic commercial town. It really made me sick, dog-eat-dog. Things got worse and worse. I was driving truck, delivering at the cafeteria for the ski area. My boss was such a money-hungry slave driving jerk. His eyes just showed dollar signs. I'd thought that driving truck would be better than being a parking attendant, like sometimes it got down to 20 or 30 below. Driving, I thought, would be self-paced. But it turned out no way: there were no lunch breaks and whoever heard of coffee breaks? That and other things frustrated me totally. We were trying to do it semi-straight, like everyone else, but we just couldn't. Not the way the rest of them up there make it, just hiking and such and not giving a fuck about anyone, just doing their own trip. I got fed up.

JA: So you came back to Vancouver?

GH: ...I didn't really fit into society — I'd been a punk rock musician for three years. Never dreamed that I would be in this situation. And Carolin Mines really upset me, the Coquahalla Valley had been my boyhood tromping ground. I used to go up there and hike with my Dad. Now part of that watershed has been polluted with cyanide and whatever else the mine was dumping. Julie got a map of B.C. that showed environmentally endangered areas and there were projects and devastated areas all over B.C. I mean everywhere. And the Carolin Mine wasn't even included. It was big stuff like the Nechako Project and the Alice Arm mercury dumping into the sea where the local Indians get all their fish. They are turning B.C. into one giant industrial park. The whole place is going to

look like New Jersey. The more I got exposed to this the madder I got. And I got exposed to hard core feminism when I met Julie.

JA: So meeting her was a real catalyst for change?

GH: Ya. I quit the band after I met her. It was also the fact that I'm a wood's person and punk is very urban. I had no time for the woods while I was in the band, on the road for three years. And Julie seemed the perfect mate — intelligent, politically aware, a feminist.

JA: And you didn't want to get in the rut of being established music?

GH: Ya. I made a vow that I was to get out of the punk scene by the time I was twenty-six. The punk scene was against the old hacks, the dinosaurs of the music business, like *Led Zepplin*, *Rod Steward*, *The Dooby Brothers*, who had become just other kinds of corporations, musical ones. Rock-and-Roll is supposed to be wild, alive and rebellious. Now the whole art of rock music is money. The recent bands even start out as old hacks, corporate groups like *Boston* and *Aerosmith*.

JA: Osterizer rock?

GH: Ya. Music to them is just what formula will make it in the computer: should we mix some digital delay; some overdubbing; use a nice clean sound on the guitar; toss in some 50's, 60's or 70's riffs — let the computer decide what will be a hit. In 1977, when I started, punk was vehemently against the "boring old farts", the dinosaurs as we called them. I didn't want to be a thirty-year old player trying to hold onto my niche. That's why it is easier to let go. So I packed it in at the 1980 Anti-Canada Day Concert, my last concert, in Victoria, July 1st. A lot of things happened on Anti-Canada Day - *Subhumans* started up then in 1977 and we ended it three years later. That was our day.

JA: And Julie got twenty years. Isn't that out of line with the six years that Doug got and your ten year sentence?

GH: Ya. That judge really nailed her. Doug and I didn't get hit with the Litton thing.

JA: Ya. I guess bombing the nuclear warhead guidance factory was hitting a little too close to home.

GH: The police reporters are different on Julie and me, than on Brent, Ann and Doug. They don't think that we are that dedicated — but they feel that the others are very dedicated. Julie and I were planning on dropping the entire thing in a year. And anyway, the money was not just going to fund the guerilla work: Julie and I were going to use some of our shares to go set up in the woods again.

JA: Was the group a united organization, or what was its structure?

GH: It was a group dedicated to the philosophy of the urban guerilla. But it was an autonomous group. For example, the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir bombing was done a month before I was involved. And at the time I said I didn't want to be involved in Litton. I was kind of swept away by it. That's not to say it wasn't OK. I agreed with the actions. It's just that I'm not suited for that kind of work. It is fine as a part of the struggle but I should be into lower-key shit like raising people's consciousness; that's what I first started, what I really wanted to do in the first place. I wanted to do support work, maybe some low-level expropriation but not the high-level stuff. I didn't want to go underground.

JA: Would such reluctance explain why the group didn't carry out some of the more serious urban guerilla moves such as kidnap, assassination and fatal bombings like the Red Brigades, the Baader-Meinhof, or the I.R.A.?

GH: Myself, I'm against terrorism. It's fucked up, even against the State, because they don't have any heart or soul and don't give a fuck about their own: there are always more cogs to fit into the machine, always more eager tools around. They just put on these shows of mourning for the public. No, I wasn't made for the urban guerilla lifestyle. It was a kind of

relief to get arrested, like a huge weight was removed from my shoulders. Sorry to say it, but it's true; while it was happening I used to have nightmares, headaches, and get into all kinds of pointless arguments.

JA: What you have been saying here sounds somewhat like a book I read called *How It All Began*, by Bommi Baumann, the West German RAF member.

GH: Yes. That was the first book that Julie gave me. I'll have to read it again.

JA: So you would differentiate between the direct action of your urban guerilla and terrorism?

GH: Sure, we were careful not to kill anyone and we made it very clear that our actions were not of a terrorist nature. We wanted to educate, to show the people what could be done.

JA: You mentioned Berkman sometime back. Would you consider his attempted "attentat" or assassination against Frick as terrorism?

GH: Ya, and it was political vengeance too. I mean I guess we could have ambushed Trudeau or something and a lot of people would have been secretly pleased — ya, it's about time someone did something about that old fart — but there would have been a tremendous uproar against it and that kind of action might have backfired. Now the Wimmen's Fire Brigade stuff wasn't terrorist action. It was an unexplored method in Canada of bringing attention to those questions. There was a consensus opinion not to be involved in assassinations. For lots of reasons, like none of us were too into doing it. It wasn't something which the public could relate to, and we already had little public support as it was. Anyway, until you remove the system there will always be someone else springing up — they're so brainwashed they think their sacrifice would mean something to corporate bosses. Things like the prosecutors and judges in Europe getting blown away by the Red Brigade I can sympathize with, but at best it is an act of revenge and, at worst, somewhat counter-productive. I can understand why, but personally I don't think that it is

something that would be effective in Canada. In El Salvador, it's different. It is effective. If the Police Chief in the district is torturing and slaughtering the peasants and then someone assassinates him, well, there's a lot of popular support for that.

JA: Well, by the amount of time that the courts handed out to Ann, Julie and Brent, it looks like they viewed what did happen in the same light, pretty well as the same thing. I don't know if the judges draw those fine lines that you do between urban guerilla action and terrorism. Do you think that the courts have created martyrs with this sentencing, spreading the seed for future direct action?

GH: Yeh. Brent and Ann were blown out of the park, they're martyrs. The State described them as evil psychotics that led me astray. But you know there are a lot of women out there who didn't dig what happened to Ann. Somehow the people out there have to become aware that they are at war. That war was declared on the people with the creating of the State. Nuclear weapons, the destruction of the environment, the all-encompassing grab for profits and progress are just different fronts on which the war is being waged. That way we are all martyrs.

JA: From the sound of it, the women had a strong role to play, particularly Julie, for you.

GH: Ya, I think the first time I saw her was at a benefit for "The Society of People Struggling to be Free". It was in support of Gary and Dino Butler. Our manager, a devout anarchist, got us involved. I started going to the meetings of this Indian group. At the time Julie was another punk fan I saw at parties and demos but what caught my eye was that she showed up at the political meetings, like that one. Most punks just play lip service to the political struggle side of it, just listen to the music but ignore the words; but here was a young woman right in the middle of things. I saw her again at the "U.S. Out of El Salvador" demo march; she was one of the organizers in the "El Salvador Support Committee". That

impressed me a lot. I started talking to her at the march, ya, me standing there like a big dumb punk while she was so busy, up to her armpits in work. That was the beginning of our relationship. When I went to her house, I immediately noticed the posters: most punk houses have a lot of punk posters on the walls and maybe a political one here and there, but she had more political posters, some really beautiful ones and just a few punk ones; ones about El Salvador, Survival Gatherings, European stuff and that environmental hazards spot poster of B.C. She is very intelligent and impressed the hell out of me.

JA: And the feminism?

GH: I went through some really drastic changes when I met Julie — about hard core feminism — she was very developed. She had spent a lot of time hanging out with female separatists...

JA: What does that mean?

GH: Well, the separatists have opted out of the whole male trip — they've said "Fuck It", men do nothing but mess up our lives so we're not going to have anything to do with them at all. Like they're serious about that too — for a while I was having doors slammed in my face, and found places where I wasn't welcome at all.

JA: Because you were a man?

GH: It was hard for me to understand too, but I can sympathize with it now because they have suffered pain I can't even realize. But it was hard for me. I can understand their trip: men do fuck over women — women are not subhumans, not fuck-bags good for nothing else. I've never been oppressed like women have been oppressed.

JA: Were you the big villain, anathema to the separatists, when you got together with Julie after her separatist experience?

GH: Well, we had lots of arguments — she was right 75% of the time: I was reacting with a lot of masculine attributes,

using certain words, “chick” for example. These people insist that certain words are not to be used because of their connotations. It’s not reverse prejudice. They have thought these things out and I respect it because it is important to them. Like if someone kept calling me fuckwad and I asked them not to, well, if they respected me, they would respect my choice and not call me fuckwad. This stuff is based on reality and it comes from suffering so I had to change.

JA: So Julie helped politicize you, helped you develop in other directions?

GH: Ya. I knew about the old-style anarchy while she knew a lot about modern guerilla warfare and feminist material. But I had the woods affinity. I’d been out there a good part of my life while she hadn’t ever really been out there, so we complemented each other — it was a good mix.

JA: This picture is of Ann, isn’t it? (Looking at the front page of the *Toronto Clarion*, 1984).

GH: Ann sure looks young in that picture, she must have been 26, or 27. She doesn’t look the same at all now. The Red Hot Video bombing blew up in her face, she got horribly scorched. When I saw her the day after, I was sick. She was only standing a couple feet from the window when they funnelled the gas in: it blew back in her face.

JA: How about Doug? Did he start from the same punk rock direction?

GH: No, he never had anything to do with that. He was sort of a mystery man, a rabid environmentalist. He was part of the “Pacific Life Community”, organizing against the Bangor, Washington, nuclear sub base. He did civil disobedience work, stuff with pamphlets. In some senses his feelings were stronger than mine about the environment, especially industrialism and its effects on animals. It deeply hurt him to hear of animals getting wiped out and the destruction of the natural world in B.C. He knew a lot about it too.

JA: The composition of the group is curious. Everyone came in from different directions.

GH: Ya, but we shared a lot of things too. We were all anti-authoritarian people, anarchists. We believed in autonomous revolution; we shared that feeling too. We had a common concern about the environment. Brent was concerned more analytically about it, while Doug's was a more emotional concern. Brent was very well read: he knew all about the guerilla struggles in Third World countries. He was a political jack-of-all-trades, with his foot in every door. I specialized more in ecological concerns, though I wasn't involved in the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir bombings. That was one of the things that attracted me to what was happening: someone was finally doing something. I didn't really have a chance to do anything in the group, I didn't do Litton because I chose not to and I was almost involved in the Red Hot Video arson, but by a stroke of fate I wasn't, even though I was convicted of it. Most of the work I did was support, collecting things. The biggest collection of things was going to be the Brink's robbery, the bulk of my work was preparing for the robbery.

JA: Did you intend to take a direct part in the robbery?

GH: I fully intended to.

JA: So funding was a problem. Was it expensive going underground?

GH: Ya, very expensive. We couldn't depend on working income. We weren't completely underground though. Doug was semi-underground; he still had someone outside the group who was regularly visiting him at his house. And Julie and I were still visiting my mother; we went there for Christmas, even had the dog along. It was only after a long time that I realized some of the intricate things that happened.

JA: Did you get a run-down of events when you joined up?

GH: No. I wasn't told a lot of things. We didn't tell each other stuff that we didn't need to know.

JA: Did the group just start with Ann and Brent?

GH: No. Doug was involved from the start. They had things going, but we didn't know what was happening. Julie and I

were saying that we wanted to stop the corporations, hinder their Third World interventions. We talked about getting together and doing something about it, while they were sitting there having already done stuff.

JA: There must have been lots of glancing around.

GH: Plenty of giggling, but they kept a pretty cool secret, but then someone would show up with a piece, like a .45 or an M-1A and we would be totally surprised. "I didn't know you had that," — "Well, I do," period. It was a strange time. Julie and I didn't have many friends; we just couldn't relate to any of them. We were very cliquish — other people were intrusions into our world.

JA: Like aliens?

GH: Ya. Very strange...And Doug is a very staunch feminist. He even, I think, found me a little repulsive — the macho overtones of punk clothes. I wore a lot of leather and I guess it seemed sexist to him. It was a joke to me because I was such a wimp — never fought anyone. So Doug was at first freaked out about that. You know, it was that whole commercial rock culture which drove me to the punk scene. The "Nifties" with their blow-dried feathered hair, nice cars and ski jackets, getting dressed up so that they could get laid. I started out with long hair, a beard, old cowboy boots and love beads, while my friends started wearing Adidas — they started following that mindless fad like sheep. Then when the punk look came along it seemed the perfect alternative. So we cut our hair: "long hair doesn't mean fuck all" — punk had its shock value — saying to that scene "your trip is dead". I was very frustrated, always have been.

JA: What frustration? What would you like to do?

GH: I seem to fall into the same scenes that I hate. It is a constant struggle because I know what's wrong with it but slip into it anyway. And that's very frustrating, that's why I called myself Gerry Useless when I became a punk, to laugh at myself while having fun. To be rebellious and entertaining at the same time.

JA: Did Brent view the punk scene as a recruitment area?

GH: No. Nothing like that. He loves the fun and the wildness. Where the political thing is, he is. He likes that action. Brent really likes the punk scene. When we came back from Jasper, Julie was wondering what Brent was doing because she knew he wasn't a guy who would just sit on his ass. He said he wanted to do militant action and we got attracted to that. He could hardly say that he was already doing it. I had thought about being a hard-core revolutionary before, with the guns and all, even before I got politically developed. We talked about it a lot and gradually it became, over time, a more realistic possibility.

JA: How did you run into Brent?

GH: I knew Brent before. He was a local anarchist who put himself into the punk scene because it was by itself somewhat political. He felt it was good to see the young end of society involved in this, and Brent's been a person of action for a long time. We started seeing Brent a lot after we got back from Jasper — we shared many feelings about sexism, nuclear war, the environment. And there is this argument Brent and I get into: he says he became a guerilla because it was the next logical step to take after his activism, but he doesn't like it when I say I did it because I was frustrated. Brent says he was never frustrated by a lack of being able to get things together. I was looking for ways to deal dramatically with my frustration. As they say, punk rockers are just frustrated professional musicians.

JA: What does the term "underground" mean to you?

GH: It is a word that lumps all illegal fronts together: it describes the clandestine resistance groups either engaged in some kind of particular liberation struggle or militantly confronts the State on some issue.

JA: What are underground methods, for example?

GH: Well, stopping things through illegal means. One of them is direct action — direct confrontation with something,

rather than taking the less direct routes such as sit-ins, die-ins, marches and demos, etc. Direct action is doing something yourself, instead of relying on someone or something else, like a political party, some group or some other structure that the State has sanctioned.

JA: So this is a personal decision?

GH: Yeh, but it is also a collective process — a smaller personal collective process.

JA: Do you have any ideas for other people interested in direct action?

GH: If there are any other underground groups in Western or Eastern Canada, the first consideration should be how far they want to go. This should be most carefully thought out. If they decide not to completely dedicate their lives to being an urban guerilla unit, their lifestyles should reflect that — keep their actions at a lower level than ours were. They should stay away from the sometimes cumbersome, sophisticated techniques that were used by "Direct Action".

JA: Like what?

GH: Oh, lots of things: stealing cars en masse, having all those books and tools on locksmithing and car theft, all that equipment. Doug put out a statement that said the same kind of things. On that lower level, it may not even be necessary to have a single gun, certainly not an arsenal. The only time guns are a necessity is when one is participating in armed expropriation, which is on a really high-level of urban guerilla activity.

JA: Well, describe some things that can be done on this lower level.

GH: This is an above ground, transient level. For example, things like smashing windows in fur stores; this would be an action against the fur trade — spraying the furs with red paint. That's low level. Against B.C. Hydro or any other corporation that has equipment out doing damage to the environment, low-level groups could fuck with the equipment, slash the

tires, put stuff in the gas. This is political vandalism: low-level direct action. On Grouse Mountain, citizens who didn't want the mountain logged hammered spikes into select trees so the lumber would be useless — it would destroy the expensive saws. Yeh, political vandalism.

JA: Isn't this kind of thing easily curbed by the corporations — more wire, dogs and security guards, etc.?

GH: No. If enough people do it, if they have a strong support group, if they keep it up, well the project becomes too expensive. Since that's the whole point of the corporations, profit, they will stop. It has worked. One of the advantages to this type of action is that it is easier to attract people to do it. The community is less apt to misinterpret the motives of those involved and it involves less risk and less consequences if one gets caught. Whereas when people decide to go high-level they should go completely underground from the start. Totally. That is the first ground rule. There can be no compromise on that.

JA: Do you feel there is a role for high level guerilla activity in B.C.?

GH: There is a role for it anywhere in the world. If the goal is revolution — a much misinterpreted word — a complete change in society, away from the exploitation/domination to a collective sharing, there is no way to avoid what some would call violent acts. There have to be a lot of people involved and there has to be a lot of support. Some might say that there isn't that support in B.C., but the groundwork has to be laid now for the armed resistance which has to come.

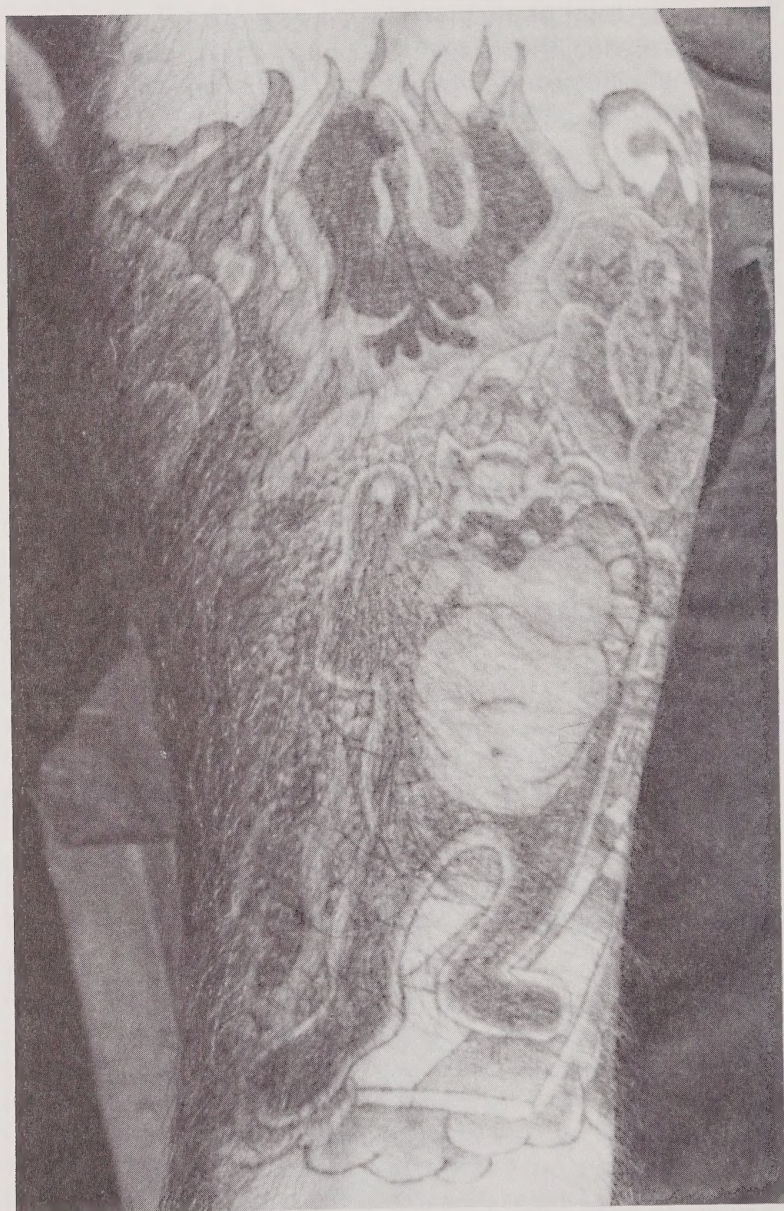
JA: What kind of groundwork?

GH: The idea that guerilla activity is a useful tool in raising political consciousness, in resisting the State, has to be started now. That's what we did. The examples have to be done now because we don't have time — the world may be destroyed tomorrow by global nuclear war and total environmental collapse. If we don't take care of the planet we won't be around to liberate anyone: women, oppressed minorities

— anyone. That's why the environment has to be dealt with now. We are losing the life of the world — its oxygen generating forests, huge areas every day. That's why the environment is my top priority.

JA: Do you believe other people in B.C. should take up high-level guerilla activity?

GH: Yes. If they feel they should be doing it. I don't feel right in recommending it to others while I have given up on that level of struggle myself. For some people it is a good idea if they are that type of person. We're never going to change things enough without forcibly removing certain elements in our society who have the power. They have everything and they'll never just give it away. They also, unfortunately, have the means to brainwash the public to believe they're helping them when they're actually robbing them. It is going to be very difficult but it has to happen. I still support revolution totally although I am a retired guerilla now.



Article: Humanities at Main and Hastings

To paraphrase and possibly to twist a well-worn cliché: our society does not require stone, concrete, barbed wire, steel, and gun towers to manufacture its prisons. As any student of social anthropology or urban geography knows, there are a number of barriers — social, economic, ethnic, and educational, to name a few — which can imprison people as effectively as the more visible variety of walls and wire mesh.

The Downtown Eastside Core of Vancouver may be seen as a prime example of a “social prison” created by invisible barriers. Enclosed within an area most often referred to as Vancouver’s “Skid Road” — implying, of course, that those who live there are all bums, drunks, drug addicts, and prostitutes — are thousands of ordinary people locked into their immediate environment with little means to attempt escape.

Certainly, the Eastside Core contains significant numbers of alcoholics, drug users, hustlers, and others who occupy ostensibly self-imposed positions on the bottom rung of the social ladder. But, aside from the fact that many of these social pariahs are actually products — self-fulfilling prophecies produced by the social prison itself (and any long-term prisoner behind visible walls can testify to the debilitating effect that prolonged imprisonment can wreak on an otherwise healthy psyche) — aside from that consideration, the fact is that the majority of residents in the Downtown Eastside are *not* drunkards and addicts and prostitutes.

The greater percentage of its population consists of old age pensioners, handicapped people, unemployed workers subsisting on U.I.C. and Welfare — many with a stunned look in their eyes. They wonder how the years of their working

lives — producing, paying taxes and union dues, raising families and contributing their sweat and expertise to their society — have brought them to this: standing in a food line three blocks long to get a sandwich, staring down the sidewalk, hiding their faces from the T.V. cameras seeking out the sensational stories about the “Skid Road”. They don’t look too much different than the lines of convicts at “feeding time” in the old penitentiaries.

Another segment of the population is just plain down-and-outers who, for one reason and another, never did get a crack at the upward mobility that could get them over the invisible walls of the Downtown Eastside perimeter...legally.

A few people stay in the area by choice — most by necessity. Where else to live for a young unemployed high school drop-out collecting \$325 to \$375 maximum largesse from the welfare coffers? A 12 x 12 room for \$200 a month in any other area of Vancouver would be a lucky find, indeed.

Obviously, not everyone in similar straits gravitates to the Eastside Core. Many people pool their resources and share accommodation in more attractive surroundings. But some people — again, for various reasons — cannot or prefer not to resort to such arrangements and simply survive as best they can, as any prisoner does, within the invisible walls, striving to retain their identity.

Another similarity to prison life is the cell-like atmosphere of many of the tiny Eastside hotel rooms which lack access to any nearby recreational facilities. Once the balance of the welfare money is gone after the rent is paid —which is usually early in the month at today’s food prices —even the relaxation of nursing a couple of draft in one of the hotel bars is a financial impossibility. Apart from walking the streets or sitting on a bus stop bench, the bars constitute, of course, the main source of a “place to go” to escape the 12 x 12 room.

In recent years, however, one alternative for the social prisoner has developed at the very heart of the Downtown Eastside Core — an alternative to walking the street or sitting in the bars. Carnegie Community Centre, located at the corner of Hastings and Main, offers a place to find a little

peace of mind, recreation facilities, diversional activities, or companionship. The Centre presently provides a haven for upwards of 2000 people a day from a diverse cross-section of the Downtown Eastside Core and fringe areas.

Originally a library, then a museum, Carnegie was saved from the developers and the wrecking ball some 4½ years ago by the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA). Many programs, facilities, and services have since been initiated at Carnegie for Eastside residents, mostly through the involvement of volunteer workers.

Recently Carnegie Centre introduced something new to its list of programs: educational opportunities for poor people. To explain the far reaching implications of this innovation, I must return briefly to the comparison between invisible social prisons and the more visible walled-in variety...both of which our society would prefer to hide away and ignore.

Two points seem salient here. The first is that one of the destructive influences of living in a social prison is analogous to that experienced by many long-term penitentiary inmates. In the beginning, a prisoner “makes the best of it” — which of course leads to “getting used to it”. One starts thinking of oneself as a prisoner, lives up to the label of prisoner, maintains the mind-set of a prisoner, accepts the limitations and boundaries that go with being a prisoner. Human beings tend to live up (or down) to the labels imposed upon them.

I have talked to many people who live in the Carnegie area (I prefer the term to “Skid Road”) who say quite candidly that they have reached the point where they are not interested in “breaking out”. They don’t care to attempt escape. They are content to stay in the Carnegie area. A number of these people have simply given up. The rut has become familiar, relatively “comfortable”. Finding and fighting for the means of escape — the tools to carve out a way to equality and social justice — have become exercises in futility. They will settle for what they’ve got, and make the best of it.

Others, long-time residents, simply prefer living in the area. They like the atmosphere. All their friends are in the Downtown Eastside Core. Socializing or living beyond the prime-

ters would be a discomfort; they would feel out of place; “out there” people live differently, have different interests, even talk a different language, as it were.

Still others talk about wanting a job and the chance to move out, but in these days of depression-figure unemployment, few jobs are available, and an objective observer frequently gains the impression that few people — even highly skilled tradesmen in the social prison — actively look for work. Initiative has become limited; ambition has dissipated. Many seem to have crossed the line between “making the best of it” and “getting used to it”. The expressed desire to “get to work, get off welfare, get a better place to live — if only I could find a job”, often sounds like the rationale that goes with seeing yourself as a hopeless case.

I can offer little hard evidence, but I believe that the debilitating experience of downward mobility from productive working person to UIC recipient, to Welfare case, to entry into the population of the social prison, engenders the loss of dignity which produces the loss of self-esteem and then the stunned expression and the look of resignation I see in people’s eyes. If you are told you are a hopeless case often enough, you will begin to believe and act like a hopeless case.

My second point is that the Carnegie area is composed of many people — young and old — who dropped out of the elementary or high school systems before they fulfilled their real potential. Perhaps they dropped out for economic reasons, perhaps because they were “turned off” by the system...any number of reasons. (One Native Indian man told me that his missionary school teachers advised him he would be “unwise” to go beyond Grade 9. He later went on to Grade 12, in spite of the advice and became a journeyman electrician.)

Many of the people in the social prison in the Carnegie area have completed Grade 12 in regular high school; many have upgraded their education to Grade 10 or 12 in “equivalency” courses, in hopes of enhancing their employment opportunities (or, in some cases, to get a few extra dollars a month from welfare).

But a significant proportion of the Downtown Eastside population are people who are "long on life experience and short on formal education".

In any event, for all these people, the notion of ever doing university-level work was, until a few months ago, a far-fetched notion indeed.

Even for people outside the walls of the social prison I have attempted to describe, recent government cut-backs in education at all levels, and the government attitude toward education — especially education for poor people — have begun to turn the universities in British Columbia into institutions for the elite, the upper classes who can afford it. Certainly, there is little hope for higher education for residents in the social prison.

But a breach has been made in the invisible walls.

Simon Fraser University's *Institute for the Humanities*, through Dr. Stephen Duguid, recently came up with an innovative idea to bring university-level education to the Eastside community.

Duguid had designed and written a special curriculum for use in university programs in Federal Penitentiaries. The curriculum — a Humanities Core Curriculum (HCC) — is entitled *Human Nature and the Human Condition* and is meant to fulfill a variety of purposes, one of which is to serve as a preparation course or "gap filler" to acquaint students with university work. Discussion based, the course has as one of its attributes the fact that it is accessible to people who may be short on formal education but who, along with life experience, have the ability to read, analyse issues in condensed excerpts from famous scholars, philosophers, and writers, and then formulate and express their views and opinions orally (and, if capable, in writing).

Duguid proposed this idea to Carnegie's Director, Nancy Jennings. Jennings had been one of the advocates and originators of an educational program in the Community Centre and had persuaded Vancouver Community College's (King Edward Campus) Department of Continuing Education to provide part-time funding for a Learning Centre Coordina-

tor to work with volunteer tutors who would bring free educational assistance to people in the Carnegie area. The facility offered tutoring at almost all levels, general help, advice, referrals, courses in English as a Second Language and Conversational French, and upgrading encouragement among its variety of programs.

The Carnegie Learning Centre became a reality in November, 1983. Duguid found out about it in March, 1984.

Long a believer that university education should be made more accessible to people in the community and with Simon Fraser already establishing downtown university facilities in Vancouver, he discussed with this writer the viability of bringing university level studies to Community Centres. We both saw similarities in the problems confronting residents in the "social prison" and those which many penitentiary prisoners describe as factors which brought them to jail. We decided to take a chance and offer the Humanities course at Carnegie as a pilot project.

Would there be a significant response from the Carnegie community and fringe area? Would local residents demonstrate the wherewithal and determination to stick with a non-credit university course with no tangible reward — just the accomplishment itself and a certificate of completion? Would people — many of whom lived through the many days wondering where their next hot meal would be found — see the value in foregoing the peace, diversions, and recreation offered in other programs, to study the readings and spend three hours in class discussion? Would only a handful of people sign up initially, and only one or two finish?

Oddly enough, many of the pessimistic questions asked were almost identical to ones that were asked when the first university courses were brought to B.C. Penitentiary some 12 or 13 years ago. Could we make it succeed at Carnegie?

Duguid would supply the course from his Humanities Core Curriculum. Carnegie would supply the space. I would supply my services as Instructor. The course would be offered free.

The course was advertised by poster in three locations for five days: The Carnegie Centre, a local Welfare office, and

the Vancouver Indian Centre. An "Information Session" was held on March 24. Twenty-six people attended. Twenty-five enrolled in the first section of the curriculum, titled "The Individual and Society". By the time the first class was held a week later (March 21) another five people had signed up. The response had far exceeded our most optimistic estimates. We had to split the class in two.

Over the next 12 weeks we had a 43 per cent drop out rate, most of them in the first 2 to 3 weeks. On June 30, 17 people finished the course. On July 15, a "ceremony" was held, and the Director of the SFU Institute of the Humanities presented 11 people with certificates. The other six received letters of congratulation for their efforts.

Since then, two "graduates" have enrolled in College courses. Another was accepted as a mature student at UBC. Refusal for a student loan, however, stymied his efforts, but he still intends to get to university somehow. Another certificate recipient is writing a play. One has started a book. Eight people from the pilot project have continued into the next section of the curriculum, and 14 are working in the Introductory section used in the pilot project.

At this writing, we are completing the two Carnegie courses and another pilot project at Westgate in the Lower Mainland Regional Correctional Centre (Okalla). From the class of 16 university students at Westgate, one prisoner was recently paroled. He attended the university class at Carnegie the next day so he might finish the course which, fortunately, has been running at the same pace as the Westgate project. The parolee intends to attend the next semester at Simon Fraser. Another prisoner at Westgate is due to be released in a few days and will complete the course at Carnegie, also. His intention is to apply for admission to Pacific Vocational Institute.

I am no "-ologist" of any kind, but for me one of the most interesting experiences has been in presenting these pilot projects — one "outside" and one "inside" — and noting little difference between the Westgate prisoners' performance and some subtle changes in attitude and demeanor, and those of

the people I envisage as living within the invisible walls of the Carnegie area.

My mandate has not been to rehabilitate, only to instruct, but I truly believe that I have seen the university experience contribute something to an awakening search for freedom in both restricted environments in some people. Again, I have no hard evidence — other than the people who have gone on to continue higher education efforts (which admittedly, they may have done anyway) — but I have detected a different look in some people's eyes and I have noted changes in their topics of conversation — which to me looks like a gain in self-esteem.

At the risk of being labelled too much the optimist, I entertain the hope that some of these people have found in themselves at least the potential for a means of escape — from behind the invisible walls of the social prison, as well as the walls we can see.

Frank Guiney

